



**This electronic thesis or dissertation has been  
downloaded from Explore Bristol Research,  
<http://research-information.bristol.ac.uk>**

*Author:*  
**Guy, Will**

*Title:*  
**The attempt of socialist Czechoslovakia to assimilate its gypsy population**

**General rights**

Access to the thesis is subject to the Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International Public License. A copy of this may be found at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode>. This license sets out your rights and the restrictions that apply to your access to the thesis so it is important you read this before proceeding.

**Take down policy**

Some pages of this thesis may have been removed for copyright restrictions prior to having it been deposited in Explore Bristol Research. However, if you have discovered material within the thesis that you consider to be unlawful e.g. breaches of copyright (either yours or that of a third party) or any other law, including but not limited to those relating to patent, trademark, confidentiality, data protection, obscenity, defamation, libel, then please contact [collections-metadata@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:collections-metadata@bristol.ac.uk) and include the following information in your message:

- Your contact details
- Bibliographic details for the item, including a URL
- An outline nature of the complaint

Your claim will be investigated and, where appropriate, the item in question will be removed from public view as soon as possible.

THE ATTEMPT OF SOCIALIST CZECHOSLOVAKIA  
TO ASSIMILATE ITS GYPSY POPULATION

Dissertation submitted for the degree  
of Ph.D. to the University of Bristol.

January, 1977.

... *Willy Guy* ...  
Willy Guy.

THE ATTEMPT OF SOCIALIST CZECHOSLOVAKIA TO ASSIMILATE ITS

GYPSY POPULATION : ABSTRACT.

The attention of the post-War Communist government in Czechoslovakia was soon drawn to the Gypsies by their massive rural-to-urban migration from their segregated shantytowns in rural Slovakia to the heavy industrial centres of Bohemia and Moravia. While approving the Gypsies' entry into the general labour force, policy-makers were alarmed by the emergence of virtual Gypsy ghettos in Czech cities.

In 1958 the Party resolved that the Gypsies' 'backward way of life' was incompatible with socialist living standards and should be eliminated as rapidly as possible by means of the Gypsies' total assimilation. Although an appeal to Marxist-Leninist nationality theory was made to legitimate the decision, this thesis argues that the Czechoslovakian interpretation was a distortion of the theory to suit the policy-makers' own political ends.

Ambitious steps were taken to prevent all natural migration by Gypsies and replace it by planned dispersal, where local authorities were to agree among themselves on quotas of Gypsies to be transported from Slovakia to the Czech lands. The transfer programme ground to a complete halt in 1968 and shortly afterwards the whole campaign was abandoned, having failed for much the same reasons as a remarkably similar attempt to assimilate Gypsies on the same territory two centuries earlier.

The demoralised government reversed its previous policy and allowed Gypsies to form their own socio-cultural associations but this promising experiment was ended in 1973 when these organisations were ordered to disband.

Part One of the thesis describes and analyses these events with the aid of government and local authority documents while Part Two complements this with the experiences of the inhabitants of a segregated Gypsy settlement in Slovakia.

CONTENTS:PART ONE - THE HISTORY OF THE ASSIMILATION CAMPAIGN

|  | <u>Page</u> |
|--|-------------|
| Chapter 1 : Introduction ... ..  | 5           |
| 2 : The History of the Gypsies in Czechoslovakia<br>(14th century - 1945) ... .. | 28          |
| 3 : The 'Gypsy Question' (1945 - 1958) ... ..                                    | 103         |
| 4 : The Assimilation Policy in Action (1958-1965).                               | 161         |
| 5 : The Breakdown of the Assimilation Policy<br>(1965-1968) ... ..               | 249         |
| 6 : Aftermath : Reconsideration of the Policy<br>(1968 - ) ... ..                | 343         |
| Appendix 'A' - Some Tables of Post-1967 Statistics...                            | 401         |
| Appendix 'B' - National and Local Government Documents.                          | 407         |

PART TWO - THE EXPERIENCE OF ONE SETTLEMENT

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Chapter 7 : Polomka - Past and Present ... .. | 425 |
| 8 : Making a living ... ..                    | 480 |
| 9 : Black and White ... ..                    | 529 |
| 10 : Possibilities of Change ... ..           | 593 |
| 11 : Conclusion ... ..                        | 667 |

APPENDICES

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Appendix 1 : Marxist-Leninist Nationality Theory ... .. | 686 |
| 2 : Nationality Problems in Czechoslovakia ... ..       | 740 |
| 3 : Minorities and International Law ... ..             | 777 |
| 4 : Public Opinion about Gypsies ... ..                 | 793 |

SOME PHOTOGRAPHS

(Mainly taken in East Slovakian settlements 1960-1973).



PART ONE

THE HISTORY OF THE ASSIMILATION CAMPAIGN.

Two Gypsy Blues.

1.           No-one respects me,  
              For I am a black Gypsy.  
              Hungry and discouraged,  
              I belong nowhere.  
  
              Yes, even a black heart  
              Needs love too.  
              God - how hard, how hard  
              This Gypsy life.
  
2.           I don't beg for bread,  
              Even though I'm hungry.  
              Just give the Gypsy  
              A little respect.

(Hübschmannová)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

|   | <u>Page</u> |
|---|-------------|
| THE AIMS AND TREATMENT OF THE THESIS ... .. | 6           |
| THE CONTENTS OF THE THESIS ... ..           | 10          |

CHAPTER ONEINTRODUCTION.The aims and treatment of the thesis

The single main aim of the thesis is to recount the series of related events during the decade from 1958 to 1968 that constituted the ambitious government-led campaign to assimilate the Republic's quarter of a million Gypsies as rapidly as possible by dispersing them geographically - throughout the country - and socially - in housing, at work, at school and in leisure activities.

The main body of the thesis - on the detailed implementation of this policy - will be treated as relatively straightforward historical narrative for the reason that, unlike a chain of events such as the 'Prague Spring' and subsequent Russian invasion, very little has been written of value about the Gypsies - largely because hardly any of the primary material on which such studies should be based has been published either inside or outside of Czechoslovakia. Therefore the presentation of much of the basic documentation relevant to the assimilation campaign in an ordered and coherent way seems to me to be of great importance and takes precedence over an approach which might take as its starting point an analysis of the social organisation of Gypsy communities etc. This is my principal justification for treating my material 'historically' rather than in the 'social anthropological' way usually adopted in studies of Gypsies. In any case I would want to argue that many features of Gypsy life within these communities are explicable only in the broader context of their continuing subordinate relationship to the enclosing non-Gypsy majority.

and that the more customary approach would involve a serious risk of underemphasising or distorting the central importance of this relationship.

However, all this is only another way of saying that the subject of the thesis is not Gypsies, as such, but their relationship with the majority population and more particularly the actions of the agencies of central and local government specifically aimed at containing and modifying their behaviour to ensure their swift and total disappearance as a distinct ethnic group.

This chronicle of events was intended at the outset to provide a well-documented analysis of the recent treatment of Gypsies in Czechoslovakia for the use of the newly-formed Gypsy associations. During the early part of my research I collaborated closely with these organisations and hoped that my efforts might aid them in their criticism of the rationale and the practice of previous policy towards the large and growing Gypsy minority. For this reason the material was cast in a mould readily intelligible to Eastern Europeans in order to contribute to the continuing debate on nationality problems in terms of Marxist-Leninist theory, rather than in a form more oriented to Western theories of race relations. However it was hoped that the relatively straightforward presentation would allow further comparative analysis at some later date.

After the associations had been ordered to disband themselves early in 1973, I decided to retain the original approach in the hope that some day active Gypsy organisations might re-emerge in Czechoslovakia and the only structural modification to the first draft has been the removal from the main text to appendices of sections on Marxist-

Leninist nationality theory and the development of nationality problems in Czechoslovakia.

The general approach might seem unsophisticated from the vantage point of Western sociology but in view of the great scarcity of detailed, reliable material on the treatment of minority and racial problems in the socialist bloc, first priority has been given to the preservation of official records. This thesis is possibly their only safe repository, which explains and justifies its undue length.

Of course, to give a completely objective account would be an impossibility since even the simplest presentation of 'facts' would embody elements of interpretation and explanation, but as regards the assimilation policy it is necessary in any case to look beyond its implementation to try to understand why such an extreme strategy should have been adopted in preference to other possibilities. This involves a separate chapter in which the proclaimed ideological rationale of the policy is examined in detail and then set against other more immediately pressing yet unstated reasons of a political nature which might have been more influential than the explicit justification in leading policy-makers to opt for the assimilation plan. To complete the task of locating the decade of assimilation in its historical, political and human context, the thesis opens with an initial chapter on the experience of Gypsies on Czechoslovak territory from their first arrival in Slovakia during the fourteenth century to their migration to the Czech industrial regions in the years following the Second World War.



Part Two has been added to the general history of Part One to illustrate how these same events were experienced by the inhabitants of a cluster of Gypsy settlements in East Slovakia and as such it complements the broad generalisations with its concrete examples.

However, it goes beyond this limited purpose in two important ways; the detailed field-data shows that Gypsy motivation was rational and intelligible and not at all the 'primitive impulses' so arrogantly assumed by remote government policy-makers. Furthermore fuller sketches from this data reveal something of the flavour of Gypsy settlement life and in particular the human costs of the insensitive and mis-directed 1958 policy. As in the case of Part One, such material is unlikely to be published in Czechoslovakia.

Although ethnographic in style Part Two is not intended as a complete study\* in itself for its aims are more specific and limited. Consequently much of the subject matter of a traditional social anthropological monograph is omitted or appears only peripherally.

---

\* Horváthová and Kára, both quoted extensively below, go some way towards meeting the need for ethnographic studies.



The contents of the thesis.PART ONE - THE HISTORY OF THE ASSIMILATION CAMPAIGN.CHAPTER TWOTHE HISTORY OF THE GYPSIES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA.(14th century-1945)

Apart from satisfying a natural interest in the development of Gypsies and of official policy and public attitudes towards them during their six centuries' residence on the territory of present-day Czechoslovakia, there are other more specific reasons for looking at aspects of Gypsy history in greater depth. As well as giving a historical introduction then, this chapter serves the important function of providing information which is relevant and necessary for an adequate assessment of the assimilation policy, for both its underlying rationale and central legislation rested on a generalised historical explanation of Gypsy development.

i) According to this account certain characteristic and undesired features of Gypsy life had derived originally from the domination to which Gypsies had been so long subjected. However, in post-war socialist society such patterns could only be an anachronism - attributable to a cultural time-lag - for the socialist revolution had supposedly eliminated the oppressive social relations that were their basis.

An alternative explanation for the persistence of these patterns (that they might also have been perpetuated to some extent by new

kinds of oppressive relationships within the socialist state) was not considered, although a few official documents did concede that traditional discriminatory attitudes could be found among local authorities entrusted with carrying out the assimilation policy. More seriously and irrespective of lapses by individuals, it can be argued that the fundamental elements of the policy itself were discriminatory and not entirely dissimilar from previous forms of domination, although appearing in new and muted fashion - outright persecution being replaced by bureaucratic direction.

ii) In addition to the general relevance of the Gypsies' historical experience, it is particularly helpful to be able to compare the 1958 campaign with a much earlier attempt to assimilate the Gypsies on the same territory, undertaken by the Habsburg monarchs Maria Theresa and her son and successor Joseph II during the second half of the eighteenth century. This attempt was remarkably similar to that of two centuries later - in conception, implementation and particularly in the reasons for which it failed, namely:

- The central policy-making and co-ordinating body in the capital had inadequate control over the local authorities whose task it was to execute the plan.
- The local authorities exploited their relative freedom from effective control to resist measures contrary to their own interests.
- The Gypsies themselves, although not implacably opposed to many of the overall aims of the policy, found the practical measures to achieve these ends unacceptable and consequently vigorously resisted them.

iii) Among the features of Gypsy life condemned as 'anachronistic remnants of previous social orders' was that of 'nomadism' - by which was meant not only the wanderings with horse and cart of the distinct and relatively insignificant sub-ethnic group of Vlach Gypsies but also the post-war migration of settled Gypsies to the cities. While

it is probable that the 1958 legal categorisation of such Gypsy migrants as 'semi-nomadic' was partly to avert possible charges of discrimination (by referring to Gypsies in terms of a way of life rather than specifically by name as an ethnic group), there is overwhelming evidence that their movement was regarded as something peculiar to Gypsies.

To refute this influential argument it must be demonstrated conclusively that the post-war Gypsy migration was quite unlike any pattern normally described as nomadism but far more akin to rural-to-urban migration, but in addition it is equally necessary to show that the historical development of most Gypsies in Czechoslovakia had been to settle and integrate from their first arrival and therefore that the post-war migration was a natural continuation of this path rather than due to any mysterious genetic regression.

iv) It is sometimes implied, in criticisms of the Gypsies' experience under socialism (viz. Ulč<sup>v</sup> in 'Soviet Studies'), that they fared better under the inter-war First Republic. However even a brief examination of this period is sufficient to establish that apart from a few humanitarian efforts made on their behalf by a group of doctors, their general lot was incomparably worse under bourgeois democracy. The exploitation, segregation, legal persecution and occasional pogroms of the 1920s and 1930s contained the seeds of the system of forced labour, apartheid and ultimately genocide under which the Gypsies were to suffer during the Second World War.



CHAPTER THREETHE 'GYPSY QUESTION' (1945-1958).

This chapter carries the historical narrative from the end of the Second World War until 1958, tracing how the Gypsies came to be seen as an urgent problem when they flooded to the industrialised Czech lands in their thousands to take advantage of the severe labour shortages there. The newcomers did not vanish among other town-dwellers but tended to concentrate in the dilapidated urban cores and by the mid-1950s, some areas were already on the way to becoming Gypsy ghettos. This build-up caused mounting official concern and was also an unwelcome reminder of the tens of thousands of Gypsies still living in their isolated and insanitary home settlements in rural Slovakia.

The Czechoslovakian policy-makers of the late 1950s characterised the 'gypsy question' primarily as a social problem, describing its manifestations in a way very similar to that of Western sociologists who adopted a 'culture of poverty' approach. However, in socialist Czechoslovakia such a situation could not be lamented as part of the natural order of things and then ignored in practice, as so often in the capitalist West, especially since the increasing visibility of urban Gypsies co-incided with the politically sensitive transition to the status of a socialist republic (in 1960). It was necessary, therefore, to find a swift resolution to the glaring contradiction between the Gypsies' 'backward way of life' and the improving cultural, social and material standards of an advanced socialist society.

It was argued that the specific 'gypsy way of life' had been deformed to such an extent by centuries of oppression under feudalism

and capitalism, that any attempt to refashion a positive Gypsy identity would be futile and could only result in the perpetuation of the Gypsies' social isolation from the rest of society. Accordingly, it was decided that the only way to achieve the rapid socio-economic equalisation of Gypsies with other citizens would be to assimilate them entirely into the surrounding Czech and Slovak communities, even though some Gypsies might not at first appreciate the wisdom of this course of action.

The policy-makers pre-empted any criticism that their plan was discriminatory - in that it represented an arbitrary alienation of the Gypsies' group rights - by an appeal to Marxist-Leninist nationality theory. In their interpretation the only ethnic categories to be guaranteed such rights during the transitory period of socialism were those of nation and national minority. Since the Gypsies failed to satisfy the criteria for either status (lacking at least one of the necessary characteristics of "language, territory, economic life . . . and culture") they were ineligible for such rights in theory and, in any case, were undergoing an objective process of natural assimilation like all other minor ethnic groups in this period. In this light the practical measures of dispersing and later 'transferring' the Gypsies, in order to achieve their rapid assimilation, could be presented as merely accelerating the already visible disintegration of separate Gypsy communities. And even if the policy were discriminatory, as a government document half-conceded in 1967, this was justified by the fact that the intention was to help the Gypsies.

As well as casting doubt on this ideological legitimization by arguing that it depended on a simplistic and one-sided interpretation of Marxist-Leninist nationality theory, the final sections of this

chapter also question the stated motivation of the assimilation policy. Given the fact that one aim of the Stalinist regime of that period was the complete ethnic and social homogeneity of Czechoslovakia's population, it is evident that the growing Gypsy minority formed an irritating and intractable obstacle and it seems plausible that the specific measures to deal with Gypsies were not isolated phenomena but rather the most extreme application of a general assimilatory principle.



CHAPTER FOURTHE ASSIMILATION POLICY IN ACTION (1958-1965)

Chapters Four and Five constitute the main body of the thesis and these record and evaluate the faltering progress of the 1958 Gypsy policy throughout the decade of assimilationism.

Chapter Four deals with the initial attempt to promote assimilation through the realisation of three main policy aims:

- the integration of Gypsies into the labour force to ensure both an economic base for a higher standard of living and the most effective re-education.
- the maximum dispersal of Gypsy population concentrations to prevent 'the perpetuation of the previous backward way of life' and to allow contact with new, progressive living patterns.
- complete control over natural migration so that dispersal plans should not be thwarted and to aid the successful completion of re-education by work.

The chief instrument in this first phase of the campaign was a law banning 'nomadism', backed up by a comprehensive register of all nomadic persons, but because of the onerous duties this law imposed upon local authorities, it was rarely used by them and natural migration continued virtually unchecked. Meanwhile local authorities made little effort to disperse their unwelcome Gypsy populations but instead sought to contain them.

Central government seemed powerless to prevent the frustration of its plans and a 1964 Slovakian survey confirmed what had long been evident - that there had been significant progress towards the first policy aim alone.

This failure was dwarfed in importance by the contemporaneous collapse of the third five-year plan (1961-5) but while planners in the broader sphere of the economy were realising that the breakdown of grandiose and unworkable schemes necessitated a radical rethinking of fundamentals, this painful lesson had not yet permeated to the peripheral area of Gypsy policy by 1965. There, the response to failure was still the instinctive dirigiste reaction; to intensify the policy that had foundered by redoubling the detail of the plans and compounding the bureaucracy to administer them. Instead of re-examining the assumptions of 1958, the policy-makers simply reaffirmed the previous aims and added a fourth:

- effective central control over local authorities to ensure that they carried out their duties properly.

#### CHAPTER FIVE:

##### THE BREAKDOWN OF THE ASSIMILATION POLICY (1965-1968).

Action to remedy the stagnant situation seemed bold and impressive at first sight. Whereas formerly there had been a naive expectation that dispersal could be carried out locally without special funds or central supervision, it was decided in 1965 that the disproportionate burden of Slovakia should be shared with the Czech lands, that additional resources should be released from the exchequer and that to co-ordinate and monitor the whole programme a separate 'Government Committee for Questions of the Gypsy Population' should be established.

A detailed timetable giving annual quotas of Gypsies to be 'transferred' from Slovakia was agreed between the relevant local authorities and approved by the Government Committee and at the same time plans were made to improve basic amenities in Gypsy settlements. To prevent continuing natural migration the nomadism law was to be amended but in the meantime local authorities were instructed to treat "every unplanned, unorganised, unconfirmed transfer of a gypsy person or family" as "undesirable migration" and to send such Gypsies home at their own expense.

In practice, however, the government plans fared little better than in the preceding period for the re-organised administrative structure, on which the success of the 1965 measures depended, proved wholly inadequate to the task. The impotence of the co-ordinating Government Committee was evident in the declining rate of transfer and dispersal and even more so in the low level of budget utilisation by local authorities. This meant, among other things, the deterioration of conditions in the settlements as the growing population levels steadily increased pressure on *still* scarce amenities.

The attempt to eliminate natural migration suffered a similar fate for the Constitutional Law Committee of the National Assembly ruled that the proposed modifications to the nomadism law infringed the constitutional rights of Czechoslovakian citizens. Although the decision clearly undermined the legal basis of the whole campaign from 1958 onwards, this disturbing possibility was not investigated further.

Eventually, against a background of general political disintegration following the August 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact armies, the 'dispersal and transfer' programme ground

to a complete halt and the formal dissolution of the Government Committee in November 1968 marked the end of the assimilation campaign. To attribute this final collapse to the external situation would be mistaken : local authorities had effectively sabotaged the initial phase and there was no real reason why they could not repeat their earlier success.

## CHAPTER SIX :

### AFTERMATH : RECONSIDERATION OF THE 1958 POLICY (1968- )

The abandonment of the assimilation campaign left an extremely confused situation in which several main elements played an important part - nationalism, federalisation, official despair, the re-establishment of political control and Gypsy aspirations. This chapter tries to show their complex interrelationship in determining the future of the Gypsies.

The outcome of mounting nationalist pressures which culminated in 1968 was a substantive improvement in the legal position of major nationalities in the Republic in relation to their strength; the formal status of the Slovak nation was revised by federalisation of the state, the more important national minorities were given additional protection by a new law whilst the large yet least mobilised Gypsy community was considered for national minority status but rejected as 'an uncrystallised ethnic group'.

Eventually, a peculiar compromise was adopted in the Gypsies' case; they were granted the privileges of a national minority, but with no guarantee that these would continue. In the same month in



which the Government Committee was dissolved, permission was granted by the Ministry of the Interior for the formation of Gypsy associations in the Czech lands and Slovakia.

This complete reversal of previous policy was not a clear and decisive step as had been the case in 1958; it was tentative and uncertain of its theoretical justification. The key decision to permit Gypsy associations did not stem from any conviction on the part of central government that it had been fundamentally mistaken in the past but appeared to have been taken opportunistically in a mood of despondent resignation. Bankrupt of ideas after the breakdown of the transfer programme, officials hoped that perhaps the direct involvement of Gypsies in some organised fashion might prove beneficial.

There was another subsidiary reason why the associations were permitted - political expediency. At a time when the government of 'normalisation' was in desperate need of public support, organisations willing to proclaim their loyalty to the regime and their approval of Soviet intervention were hard to find. Although the Gypsies' pro-Soviet stance derived from the fact that the Red Army had saved them from physical extermination, the short-lived rise of their associations proved to be a sad repetition of the Gypsies' accustomed historical role as a tool in the service of reactionary and unpopular rulers.

For a time the associations' strategy of cautious ingratiation paid off handsomely but once complete political control had been re-established these organisations became an irrelevance to be

discarded after a decent interval. When their inevitably erratic progress irritated the regime, the associations were simply ordered to disband themselves in 1973, for having 'failed to fulfil their integrative function'. The original bureaucratic decision went unrecorded and against it there was no possibility of appeal.

## PART TWO - THE EXPERIENCE OF ONE SETTLEMENT

Part Two has been split into four main chapters, although the overlapping themes and material make the division appear somewhat arbitrary at times.

### CHAPTER SEVEN

#### POLOMKA - PAST AND PRESENT. -

is mainly historical and tries to give an overall picture of the development of the settlement against the broader background of Part One. The earlier part of the chapter shows a development pattern not dissimilar from the general account given in Chapter Two. The painfully slow provision of basic amenities in the post-Second World War period is then linked to the local council's apparent refusal to take any positive action to implement the assimilation policy.

### CHAPTER EIGHT

#### - MAKING A LIVING -

challenges the simplistic government view of the 'gypsy question' and in particular distorted assumptions about Gypsy motivation which are best exemplified by the central and related myths that continue to flourish in official reports and popular belief. In place of the



stereotype Gypsies - wandering aimlessly around the country, work-shy and content to subsist on family allowances - a clear pattern emerges of chain-migration between the settlement and selected industrial centres which bears little resemblance to any typically Gypsy nomadism but instead appears a quite characteristic form of rural-to-urban migration, motivated principally by the hope of better economic and social conditions. Far from confirming the notion of Gypsies as idle parasites these sections show Gypsies often working themselves to exhaustion, ruining their physical health and family life in the process.

#### CHAPTER NINE

##### - BLACK AND WHITE -

probes the difficult but crucial area of Gypsies' self-perceptions - as Gypsies in general, as inhabitants of a specific settlement and as members of particular families. Short sections on feuding and status divisions within the settlement examine the fragmenting effects of Gypsy subordination to enclosing white society and the chapter concludes with a discussion of whether ethnic relations in the village of Polomka can be characterised justifiably as a form of apartheid.

#### CHAPTER TEN

##### - POSSIBILITIES OF CHANGE -

tries to sketch the very different situation in settlements in the vicinity of Polomka and also in the industrial city. The optimism in Sedlice and Podhradie is in complete contrast to the despondent pessimism that fills Polomka and is of especial importance because it

arose in a manner quite contrary to the expectations and recommendations of the 1958 policy-makers. As such, the solid achievement in these settlements strengthens the case for a pluralist rather than assimilationist approach to the problem of socio-economic equalisation.

Finally, more as a postscript than a conclusion, three sketches are included to show the impossible conditions under which the Gypsy associations attempted to function and which severely hampered them as a force for change. The examples are taken from local, district and regional level and complement the account of the demise of the national organisations as a whole at the end of Chapter Six.

#### CHAPTER ELEVEN

#### - CONCLUSION -

summarises the general shortcomings of the assimilation policy and then re-iterates the differential effects of national and local government practice on the Gypsy inhabitants of the Polomka, Sedlice and Podhradie settlements in East Slovakia. Although providing a narrow basis for generalisation, the experience of these settlements suggests that an alternative policy of strengthening Gypsy identity would have been far more fruitful.

Nevertheless, in spite of the vagaries of official policy, the material conditions of many Gypsies improved steadily after the Second World War, mainly as a consequence of the Gypsies own willingness to seize the new work opportunities offered them by an expanding economy. Their achievement has created a solid basis for further advance and at the same time has raised the aspirations of the broad mass of Gypsies and particularly of the younger generation. How these new

hopes will find expression is problematic but, given the previous historical development in Czechoslovakia, it is a distinct possibility that they may eventually be articulated by a Gypsy nationalist movement forming part of a broader socialist opposition to the cynically manipulative brand of Stalinism that the Warsaw pact invasion re-established in Czechoslovakia.

APPENDIX ONE :- MARXIST-LENINIST NATIONALITY THEORY -

aims to substantiate the claim made in Chapter Three that, rather than consisting of a single unified body of doctrine on which all leading theorists are in agreement, Marxist-Leninist nationality theory contains two alternative and conflicting interpretations which have been opposed in Marxist debate from the time of **Marx and Engels** until the present-day polemics of Soviet academicians. These rival approaches to ethnic community development point to diametrically opposed policies to be pursued by a socialist state.

THE ASSIMILATIONIST APPROACH sees nationality as little more than a temporary by-product of class formation and, as such, having no value other than as a possible means to hasten the socialist revolution. Nationality and other forms of ethnicity consequently have no positive significance when the socialist era is reached and will disappear rapidly before the communist phase.

The Policy for a Socialist State should therefore be to encourage the assimilation ('merging') of national and ethnic minorities, interpreting any resistance by them as due to reactionary elements, guilty of bourgeois nationalism.

THE PLURALIST APPROACH acknowledges a greater continuity of ethnic identity under pre- and post-capitalist conditions. Capitalism created great inequalities between nations and between nationalities and consequently interests and accompanying loyalties often followed ethnic rather than class lines. The socialist revolution, in itself, does not eradicate these inequalities automatically and further deterioration of relations can only be avoided by a conscious and determined programme to redress the balance. Any assimilation during the socialist period will only take place if entirely voluntary and probably only after a virtual renaissance of ethnic communities.

The Policy for a Socialist State should therefore be to encourage the development ('flourishing') of national and ethnic minorities, interpreting any resistance by majority groups as due to reactionary elements, guilty of "great power chauvinism decked by a mask of internationalism."

(Stalin).



APPENDIX TWO :  
NATIONALITY PROBLEMS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

It is difficult for most Western readers to appreciate the complexity and intensity of inter-ethnic relations in central Europe and in particular the deep roots and continuing relevance of ethnicity.

Czechoslovakia is no exception for throughout its brief half-century of existence as an independent state the ethnic diversity of its inhabitants has been a major consideration governing policy and during the Republic's severest crises has played a crucial role. For this reason, if for no other, the 'gypsy question' should be seen against the background of the broader problem of ethnic relations and not, as is customary, as some unique and isolated problem in its own right.

Chapter Three has already given some idea of the contemporary political context of the 1958 policy which indicated that there was a general assimilatory approach towards national minorities in post-War Czechoslovakia where, as the local authority manual declared, "the national question. . . is subordinated to the tasks of building socialism in our state".

The origin of these assimilatory pressures is not to be found in a desire to establish complete and unified control over the country which was in any way peculiar to the post-War communist administration but can be traced to the contradiction inherent in the 1918 creation of the First Republic as a purported nation-state composed largely of national minorities. The rulers' fear of the divisive power of nationalism, so evident in the 1950s, was no new phenomenon in Czechoslovakian history but the continuation of an unbroken tradition of inter-ethnic

rivalry, ultimately deriving from the unequal development of the Habsburg Empire.

As such the development of Czechoslovakia is an interesting case-history to set against the general Marxist-Leninist nationality theory outlined in the previous appendix.

### APPENDIX THREE :

#### - MINORITIES AND INTERNATIONAL LAW -

first examines the vain search by political theorists to discover objective criteria of nationality or minority status and then makes a brief comparison of the attempt of the United Nations to guarantee minority rights to that of Marxist-Leninist nationality theory.

### APPENDIX FOUR :

#### - PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT GYPSIES -

gives examples of the extreme hostility of Czechs towards Gypsies, expressed in a public opinion survey conducted in Ostrava in the late 1960s. This is of particular interest since such opportunities to vent feelings on sensitive issues are rarely offered by the strictly-controlled media of the socialist bloc. A slightly later national survey in Czechoslovakia on the same subject was suppressed before publication.



CHAPTER TWO.THE HISTORY OF THE GYPSIES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA.Page

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Ways of Looking at Gypsy History ... ..     | 29 |
| The Important Case of Czechoslovakia ... .. | 33 |

PART ONE : EARLY HISTORY

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Early Settlement in the Danube Lands ... ..                         | 37 |
| First Arrivals in Western Europe ... ..                             | 41 |
| Gypsy Persecution and Economic Development in Western Europe ... .. | 44 |
| The Czech Lands and Slovakia in the Age of Darkness ...             | 47 |
| The Age of Enlightenment ... ..                                     | 53 |

PART TWO : THE MODERN AGE

|  |    |
|--|----|
| The Appearance of a 'Modern' Gypsy Policy in Western Europe ... .. | 69 |
| The Czech Lands and Slovakia in the Nineteenth Century ...         | 75 |
| The First Republic and the Second World War ... ..                 | 84 |

CHAPTER TWO.THE HISTORY OF THE GYPSIES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

The historical material in this chapter is presented as a necessary introduction to the later policy pursued towards Gypsies in post-Second World War Czechoslovakia. The chapter also seeks to locate Czechoslovakian developments in a wider European context and to dispel certain misconceptions about Gypsies widespread among both writers and legislators.

To aid the reader in following the narrative against a background of shifting political boundaries and ethnic balance a table is provided at the end of this chapter laying out the major changes in this complex region.

Ways of Looking at Gypsy History.

Any general historian of the Gypsies is faced with the problem of attempting the overall account of a population estimated at more than seven million (Puxon : 4)\* and spread throughout the world in a diaspora only equalled by that of the Jews. Confronted with such an inevitable divergence of historical experience it is hardly surprising that the chronicler has usually sought some unifying theme to bind together his widely varied material.

By far the most common device has been to focus on cultural homogeneity, arguing that wherever they have travelled the Gypsies have retained their ethnic distinctness by deliberately preserving a specific culture and, with it, a consciousness of themselves as a separate, secret community, systematically shunning the largely hostile non-Gypsy societies that surrounded them - apart from the minimum contact necessary

---

\* All references are given in full at the end of each chapter.

to gain a livelihood. In this vein Jean-Paul Clébert, perhaps the most widely read modern historian of the Gypsies, wrote:

the Gypsies . . . are the unique example of an ethnic whole perfectly defined, which, through space and time for more than one thousand years, and beyond the frontiers of Europe, has achieved success in a gigantic migration - without ever having consented to any alteration as regards the originality and singleness of their race.

(Clébert : 17)

This type of approach was first developed in the nineteenth century when the Gypsy was presented as a home-grown version of the 'noble savage', an exotic primitive who scorned to become an agricultural or industrial labourer and wandered at will through the countryside communing with Nature. Although loosely based on the nomadic Gypsies of western Europe this romanticised stereotype owed as much to an emotional rejection by the Gypsiologist of routine life in industrial society as it did to his knowledge of Gypsy communities.\* The predominance of the stereotype proved a mixed blessing for whilst a number of gifted enthusiasts were attracted to Gypsy studies, they usually came with pre-conceived notions of the Gypsy's significance as a symbol of freedom and consequently the manner in which they presented their findings often served to perpetuate the illusion of a people strangely untouched by wider society. This helps to explain the rather puzzling inflexibility that characterises assertions of the unitary nature of Gypsy culture but more particularly the insistent identification of nomadism as its kernel.

---

\* It is hardly fortuitous that the most rapidly industrialising country, England, should have generated the greatest interest in Gypsies. (e.g. the founding of the Gypsy Lore Society in 1888).

On the whole the legacy of this approach has been a sad one for even in the case of England - the paradigm - the popularisation of a myth in the nineteenth century helped to obscure the complex and developing relationship between Gypsy and industrial society. Some of the bitter confusion in the twentieth century derives directly from the contradiction between the stereotype, static and artificial even at the time of its creation (and yet which permeated the consciousness of legislators), and the conflicting reality of a dynamic Gypsy economy which has continued to respond to industrial development.

Elsewhere in Europe this approach has proved more obviously inadequate to explain the general development of Gypsy history, presenting writers with the dilemma of either abandoning their quest for the unitary culture or else providing special, alternative explanations of patterns which diverge from their chosen model. Yet it is indicative of the entrenched influence of this approach that even so careful and authoritative a researcher as Clébert, who explicitly rejected the romanticised stereotype (ibid.: 123), should still have followed the dubious path of seeking a "common denominator" of Gypsy culture, (ibid.: 20,200). This he located in "their ancestral nomadism" (ibid.: 222), arguing that "the Gypsy is primarily and above all else a nomad. His dispersion throughout the world is due less to historical or political necessities than to his own nature". (ibid. : 246).

Where settling had occurred, it was attributed to degeneration.

The sedentary Gypsies are generally 'excluded' people, groups or families or couples who have founded a family and who have been banned from the clans or made 'maîmé', that is 'unclean' because of serious violations of the Tradition.

(ibid. : 246).



The implausibility of this as a general explanation is apparent when it is realised that the countries with the largest Gypsy populations are in eastern Europe where the majority of Gypsies are not only 'sedentary' but have been so for centuries and therefore that Clébert's "groups or families or couples" in fact must number more than a million people. In Clébert's awkward reformulation - "the great majority of authentic Gypsies are still uncompromising nomads". (ibid. : 247) [my emphasis] - he unconsciously conceded that his thesis of cultural unity was saved more by his action as self-appointed custodian of 'authentic Gypsy culture', as he conceived of it, than as a chronicler of choices actually made by Gypsies in concrete historical situations.

Another, relatively modern, way of seeking to unify the range of Gypsy experience has been to focus not on their supposed cultural homogeneity but on the almost universal discrimination they have suffered as a despised minority. This method was adopted by Kenrick and Puxon with the justification that:

Attitudes right across western and northern Europe varied little and we have for this reason generally ignored political frontiers. We have not attempted to follow national trends in anti-Gypsy thought and action; it is a European phenomenon with which we are dealing in which the different social groups - peasants, clergy and nobility - have played their part.

(Kenrick and Puxon : 18)

Although effective in revealing the extent and continuity of hostility towards Gypsies, this approach also carries the suggestion that the persecution of Gypsies was somehow undifferentiated and consequently inexplicable in historical terms. If they were persecuted no matter what the conditions or the situation, how could one start trying to understand this persecution? And what would be the point anyway, for perhaps it would always be there?



A more fruitful approach would seem to be to probe the variety of Gypsy experience in specific historic situations rather than stressing its universal nature. For example; under what conditions did Gypsies settle? in what circumstances were they persecuted in certain ways?

General answers are difficult to provide but even particular answers are not easy, largely because of the way in which much previous data has been presented. Historians almost invariably, and understandably, ignored Gypsies. Gypsiologists frequently, and unforgivably, ignored history. They wrote myopically about these people almost as if the Gypsies were the sole arbiters of their fate whereas, as a dispersed and vulnerable minority, it was far more likely that their history would be more a tale of what was done to them than of what they themselves had done. Even this tale has to be considered in a broader context, for most authorities had far more pressing difficulties to contend with than complaints against a few Gypsies, so when action was taken against them perhaps this was only part of an attempt to resolve more general problems. The possibility is worth bearing in mind.

#### The Important Case of Czechoslovakia.

A survey of the history of Gypsies in Czechoslovakia has the additional advantage of possessing a more general significance, for the territory of the present-day Republic straddles the frontier of what might be termed the 'Western' and 'eastern' areas of Gypsy development in Europe.

To the west, in the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia, the pattern has been similar to that in Germany, France and England where Gypsies were usually regarded as worthless pests by the authorities, who either

ignored them or legislated savagely to expel and execute them in order to deter further immigration. In western Europe Gypsies are still largely nomads to this day.

However in Slovakia, the eastern part of the Republic which until 1918 was part of Hungary,\* the pattern resembles that of the Danube lands and the Balkans. From their first appearance there Gypsies were often seen as potentially valuable, for their labour power and as taxable subjects, and in consequence they were permitted, encouraged and even forced to settle by local authorities or the state. This development is fully compatible with the relatively heavier norms of feudal exploitation in eastern Europe. (Anderson : 313). It is these areas that still have the largest Gypsy populations, mainly settled, although there have always been some nomadic groups.

To what extent these divergent patterns can be attributed to dissimilar Gypsy aspirations and to what extent to the limited options available in different socio-economic conditions is a complex problem beyond the scope of this chapter. If it were soluble it would require at least a set of detailed historical studies explaining Gypsy relations with various social classes and groups during successive periods and seeking to link those relations to more fundamental developments. Probably the major differences between the western and eastern patterns are due to underlying modes of economic development (capitalist industrialisation/feudal ruralism) and associated methods of state formation (nation states/multi-national states) but this would need careful demonstration (viz. Kenrick and Puxon : 43,; Anderson : 303).

---

\* See the note at the end of this chapter for a table of states and peoples inhabiting them.

It is not suggested, of course, that all Gypsies or all authorities always conformed to the pattern appropriate to their geographical area, but that as a model these rough generalisations prove helpful in understanding the varied trends of Gypsy history in Europe up to the present.

It is particularly important to the later argument of this thesis to show that, for whatever reason, the history of Gypsies in Slovakia - the homeland of virtually all adult Gypsies in Czechoslovakia today - has not been that of uncompromising nomadism as in the Czech lands. Instead it has been akin to that of settled immigrants attempting to penetrate the host economy, although blocked beyond a certain point by a system of social relations which imprisoned them in an inferior, caste-like position. As one of its principal themes, therefore, the first part of this chapter shows the early establishment of these two different patterns in the Czech lands and Slovakia.

The administrators who framed the 1958 assimilation policy failed to appreciate this crucial difference because, in spite of their allegedly historical approach, they also shared some of the tenets of the romanticising view. Although claiming to explain the development of the Gypsies as a response to oppressive socio-economic conditions, they clung nevertheless to the belief that there was an inner, untouched core of Gypsy culture, central to which was the trait of nomadism, that had been preserved by centuries of social isolation and was still relevant to their present-day behaviour.

It was this conviction that led them to identify the post-Second World War mass movement of Gypsies, from their segregated settlements in rural Slovakia to the industrial regions of the Czech lands, as self-evidently nomadic; a minimum of research would have suggested the more



plausible alternative characterisation of rural-to-urban migration.

Indeed, given the analysis of Gypsy history in Slovakia as a pattern of early and continuing settlement, the phenomenon of such migration would be a natural extension of the prior trend towards increased integration, made possible for the first time by a revolutionary change in social relations.

However the 1958 policy-makers were by no means unique in their belief in inherent Gypsy nomadism and while their approach bears a closer overall resemblance to the eighteenth century Habsburg attempt at total Gypsy assimilation than to the intervening partial solutions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the 1958 legislation has features in common with the western-style 1880s' and 1927 measures, designed in the industrialising Czech lands with nomadic Gypsies primarily in view. For this reason the second part of this chapter also traces the development of the 'modern' policy of harassment of Gypsies, common to almost all western European countries, as well as showing the continuation of the previous patterns of nomadism in the Czech lands and settlement in Slovakia until the outbreak of the Second World War.



PART ONE - EARLY HISTORY.Early Settlement in the Danube Lands.

The Gypsies left their original homeland in northern India around 1000 A.D. This much has been established by linguistic and later, genetic research, but their precise origin, their form of society and the reason for their exodus westwards will probably never be known. They reached Europe by the early fourteenth century, crossing from Asia Minor by way of Crete and the Peloponnesus, and continued their diaspora westwards and northwards.

By the end of the fourteenth century they were already settled in large numbers in the Balkans and Danube lands where a relatively undeveloped economic structure and primitive technology gave Gypsy smiths and cobblers the chance to compete with local artisans. Rulers soon incorporated the newcomers into their social and economic order by permitting them to work and imposing taxes or else simply by making serfs of them.

From their first appearance in Serbia (1348), Gypsies were "shoeing smiths or harness makers, paying an annual tribute of forty horse-shoes" (quoted Clébert : 56) and soon "in Serbia at least they largely replaced local smiths because their handiwork proved superior". (Kenrick and Puxon : 24). Although economically integrated, Gypsies remained a separately identifiable group and like other ethnic communities in the Balkans, they often formed their own quarter in towns, specialising in a limited number of occupations. Despite their initial success the Gypsies proved unable to maintain their position since their competitors were better placed to utilise state power in their own interests. Consequently "Serbian coppersmiths held a protected monopoly in the Banat

during the seventeenth century, Gypsies being barred by law from manufacturing copper utensils". (ibid : 55). Yet probably because of the slow rate of economic development there was a need of Gypsy productive capacity for many centuries and rather than banning their metal-working outright, the more usual way of controlling their competition was to limit their production to that of simpler and less profitable items.

The Guild of Locksmiths at Miskolc in [northern] Hungary canvassed successfully in 1740 for an order stopping Gypsies doing any metalwork outside their tents. As can be imagined this restricted them to small operations.

(ibid : 55)

Some of the earliest references to Gypsies in the Danube states mention them as serfs. In 1340 a Serbian vojvoda (local ruler) presented Gypsy families to a cloister as serfs and in 1387 the ruler of upper Wallachia presented another cloister with forty Gypsy families. (Horváthová: 35). It is impossible to estimate what proportion of Gypsies became serfs; however, documents suggest that the drive to enserf them was strongest in Wallachia and Moldavia (present-day Rumania), where the flourishing fourteenth-century transport trade to the Black Sea ports created serious labour shortages in other sectors which Gypsies were used to meet - as smiths, weapon-makers, masons and brick-layers. (viz. Panaitescu : 58-72 esp. 64,65). In Rumania Gypsies were finally freed from slavery only in 1864.

A mixed system apparently operated in Hungary (and Serbia), according to the numerous records of them in Hungary during the fourteenth century (e.g. 1329, 1377, 1381, 1400 etc.) and a knight from Spiš (east Slovakia) noted in a contemporary chronicle that Gypsies wandered in the nearby woods, obviously not serfs. (Horváthová : 36). However the most widespread

early pattern in fourteenth and fifteenth century Slovakia was for Gypsies to settle around feudal castles. There are frequent references to Gypsies as castle musicians and smiths and they provided a complete range of services at the important Spiš<sup>v</sup> castle ( where, in 1423, Emperor Sigismund furnished a letter of safe-conduct to one of the first Gypsy groups to enter western Europe). Previously at Spiš<sup>v</sup> various tasks such as wood gathering, preparing and serving food and grooming horses and hunting dogs had been performed by the villagers of nearby Beharovce to such an extent that castle servants were known as 'Behars', but during the fifteenth century these peasant 'Behars' were replaced by Gypsies. (Horváthová : 97).

The most frequently mentioned male Gypsy occupation at this time was that of soldier, especially during the latter half of the fourteenth century following the Turkish invasion of Hungary. The Hungarian vojvoda Drakula used Gypsy soldiers against the Turks in 1462 and the Hungarian kings commented favourably about Gypsy soldiers in 1476, 1487, 1492 and 1496. (ibid. : 97).

Not all Gypsies settled, though, for fifteenth century sources refer to nomadic bands living by fortune-telling, magical healing and theft. At the start of the sixteenth century various robber bands, including Gypsy groups, preyed on the important Polish-Slovakian trade route and in 1500 the accounts book of the town of Bardejov (east Slovakia) recorded payments made in compensation to traders robbed by Gypsies. (ibid : 98)

Social differentiation was therefore extreme among Gypsies from their first appearance in Slovakia for while some lived the precarious life of robbers in the woods, others sought employment and protection from the ruling nobility and were fortunate that conditions permitted their skills to be utilised. A few won social standing and occasionally



even knighthood for distinguished service as soldiers or musicians and contemporary portraits of celebrated Gypsy violinists show them dressed in the fashion of lesser Magyar nobility. Gypsies, like many immigrant groups elsewhere, naturally saw their best chance to establish themselves in professing loyalty to the ruling group, but the isolation of such newly-settled Gypsies from the Slovak and Magyar\* peasantry made them vulnerable to manipulation by their protectors, a situation which feudal lords were not slow to exploit.

A major Hungarian peasant uprising which had spread to southern Slovakia was crushed in 1514 by the Palatine, Ján Zápolský. He then executed the 'peasant king', as the leader of the revolt was ironically called, by seating him on an iron throne, which was then heated, and finally placing a red-hot iron crown on his head. These gruesome torture implements were forged by a large group of travelling Gypsy smiths who had previously manufactured weapons for the Archbishop of Pecs in Hungary. (Horváthová : 99). "Some time later the Lord of Czernabo, an enemy of Zápolský, had these same Gypsies imprisoned and impaled alive". (Clébert : 101).

Zápolský was later (1526) an unsuccessful contender for the throne of Hungary and to revenge himself on the Slovakian towns which had supported his Hapsburg opponent, he used Gypsies to set fire (in 1534) to four of the most important Slovakian towns; Košice, Levoča, Sabinov and Bardejov. Some of the Gypsy incendiaries were captured and confessed that they had orders from Zápolský to burn a total of thirteen Slovakian towns, which was confirmed by written instructions found on them. (Horváthová : 100).

---

\* Viz. footnote on page 100.



Such manipulation of Gypsies by feudal lords in the class struggles of the sixteenth century must have worsened relations with the Slovak peasantry and burghers, but evidently not to the extent of preventing further settlement by Gypsies around Slovakian towns and villages, as many documents testify. For example, in 1563 Gypsies were permitted to settle at Liptovský Hrádok (central Slovakia) by the regional authorities to work as smiths, making simpler implements for local farmers as well as weapons for the night watchmen. (ibid.)

As well as an apparent increase in the numbers of Gypsies voluntarily settling during the 16th century, feudal lords renewed their attempts to enserf them. In 1538 Zápolský ordered the nobility to respect the 'traditional freedom of Gypsies', although this was probably in order to monopolise them himself. In 1557 his widow appointed Hungarian nobles as 'vejvody' of the Gypsies, which was merely a device for taxing Gypsies at the rate of one florin annually per head.

#### First Arrivals in Western Europe.

The early history of the Gypsies in western Europe is strikingly different. The first undisputed reference to Gypsies in the Czech lands was, significantly, the 1399 entry in the Book of Executions of the Lords of Rožmberk where "as well as some Germans from Austria in the robber band in South Bohemia was some black gypsy, the groom of Ondrej". (Davidová : 15).

From the beginning of the fifteenth century references to Gypsies became more frequent and more detailed until in 1417 a remarkable group, several hundred strong, appeared in Hungary. After travelling westwards

across Slovakia and Bohemia,\* the large company divided into groups which were later to appear in North Germany, Bavaria, Rome, Paris and Barcelona. Posing as penitents from Little Egypt\* on a pilgrimage of expiation, these travelling groups aroused the attention of western Europe, partly because of their unusual appearance and the apparent nobility of their leaders but also because they were supported by impressive letters granting them safe-conduct and jurisdiction over their own people. The Gypsy bands made a livelihood by soliciting alms, performing magic, telling fortunes, buying and selling horses, dancing and tumbling, and also petty thieving; all occupations compatible with, or even requiring, nomadism.

Their obvious difference from Gypsies previously settled in eastern Europe has usually prompted the explanation that they were simply a different tribe of Gypsies. Stampach, a noted Czech Gypsiologist, believed that "they did not come from Hungary, where Gypsies were already established, but from the Orient to Europe with the Turks". (quoted Horváthová : 44). However, a straightforward account of their appearance as the unplanned intrusion of a primitive nomadic tribe practicing their traditional occupations is inadequate, as Horváthová has convincingly argued, because the newcomers seem more, rather than less sophisticated than most Gypsies in the Balkans at that time.

It almost appears as if they made a careful market survey before their arrival for they knew western European languages and soon possessed accurate maps and almanacs indicating fairs (Clébert : 68) and their

---

\* Hence the names for these people : bohémien, Gypsy, gitan, gitano etc. 'Little Egypt' may derive from the contemporary German term for the Turkish-dominated Middle-East - 'Klein Egypten' (Acton : 61).

numbers included craftsmen who could make seals and copy official documents. Even more remarkable was their initial success in obtaining powerful letters from such rulers as the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund and Pope Martin V by means of an explanation of their origin and nomadism which was not only plausible but even meritorious in terms of current European values. A compromise explanation is that perhaps these Gypsies had travelled directly from 'Little Egypt', where they had previously learned of the possibilities of western Europe from Crusaders.

However, whatever their origin, it is probable that any attempt to follow the eastern pattern would have been unsuccessful in western Europe at that time, because of the differing conditions. The more developed craft industries were better organised to resist penetration by intruders and likewise prospects for settling would have been bleak during a period when hordes of beggars, discharged soldiers and pedlars wandered the roads (ibid. : 63, 134).

Whether they had any feasible alternative is doubtful but the strategy they adopted could only have succeeded in the short term. Inevitably it was soon recognised that their professions (e.g. fortune-tellers and magicians) were hardly compatible with their claim to be Christian penitents and consequently the all-important letters of protection were not renewed. Deprived of the privileged exemption they had previously enjoyed from the harsh anti-vagrancy statutes of the time, Gypsies found their status transformed dramatically from protected guests to persecuted outlaws. Within a century of the first appearance of the Gypsies, most countries in western Europe had passed savage laws to expel them, often on penalty of death. (viz. Kenrick and Puxon : 42,43).

In German lands legislation expelling Gypsies as alleged Turkish spies was enacted at the end of the fifteenth century, but it was not



until the mid-sixteenth century that similar measures were taken in the neighbouring Czech lands, when Gypsies were accused of aiding the invading Turks by starting the fires which broke out in Prague in 1541.

Official lethargy in implementing such laws is evident from their frequent renewal and despite a not unrealistic fear of hired incendiaries, it is possible that the legislation was intended more as a sop to public opinion, a convenient way of demonstrating that the authorities were taking some positive action against the growing Turkish threat. At times popular feeling must have been extreme, for in 1556 it was necessary to forbid the drowning of Gypsy women and children (Horváthová : 59); yet during the same period there are records of alms and letters of commendation granted to Gypsies by Czech town councils. (Horváthová : 58; Šmerglová : 46). Although some Gypsies were killed or driven out, others continued to travel the Czech lands, plying their usual trades as fortune-tellers and horse-dealers.

#### Gypsy Persecution and Economic Development in Western Europe.

All over western Europe the level of Gypsy persecution, which had been rising since the early sixteenth century, seemed to reach a crescendo in the seventeenth century but then to diminish sharply again in the eighteenth. It ran parallel, in fact, to the growth and then virtual disappearance of the associated problems of vagrancy and banditry as a centralised, national authority was gradually established and those who had been displaced from their holdings by war, famine and changes in land tenure were gradually reabsorbed into the new class and social structures of the developing capitalist economy.



While the Gypsies were seen by the authorities as perhaps the least tractable element in the troublesome, chronic condition of banditry that accompanied the transition from a pre-capitalist to a capitalist system, punitive action against them was deemed necessary. Once the social transformation had destroyed the kind of agrarian society which gave birth to bandits and the kind of peasantry which nourished them and the great age of social banditry (from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century) was past (Hobsbawm : 23), the Gypsies remained as a minor and isolated irritant to be dealt with on an 'ad hoc' local level rather than meriting major national legislation.

In France Louis XIV enacted a law in 1660 to regulate the carrying of firearms by "foreigners and strangers, [including "those who are called Bohemians or Egyptians"]", . . . in order that, above all, the open country shall be safe and the main highways rendered free and safe for the freedom of commerce and travellers". Acknowledging the failure of earlier measures to rid the country of Gypsies, a 1682 declaration by the same monarch condemned Gypsy men to the galleys 'in perpetuity', women to have their heads shaved and subsequently flogged and banished if rediscovered, and children to the poorhouse. "This was the first time that these people became in France the object of prosecutions as a [specific] minority group", as opposed to being covered by general legislation against vagrancy. (Clébert : 89, 90). Less than a decade after issuing this declaration, Louis was to make use of Gypsy incendiaries to burn Prague.

Although the 1682 measures were repeated in 1740, by this time the Gypsies were not to be expelled but were commanded "to take jobs, to put themselves in a fit condition to serve in them, or to go to work cultivating the land, or engage in other kinds of work or in trades of which they are capable". (quoted Clébert : 90).

While the Gypsies were seen by the authorities as perhaps the least tractable element in the troublesome, chronic condition of banditry that accompanied the transition from a pre-capitalist to a capitalist system, punitive action against them was deemed necessary. Once the social transformation had destroyed the kind of agrarian society which gave birth to bandits and the kind of peasantry which nourished them and the great age of social banditry (from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century) was past (Hobsbawm : 23), the Gypsies remained as a minor and isolated irritant to be dealt with on an 'ad hoc' local level rather than meriting major national legislation.

In France Louis XIV enacted a law in 1660 to regulate the carrying of firearms by "foreigners and strangers, [including "those who are called Bohemians or Egyptians"]", . . . in order that, above all, the open country shall be safe and the main highways rendered free and safe for the freedom of commerce and travellers". Acknowledging the failure of earlier measures to rid the country of Gypsies, a 1682 declaration by the same monarch condemned Gypsy men to the galleys 'in perpetuity', women to have their heads shaved and subsequently flogged and banished if rediscovered, and children to the poorhouse. "This was the first time that these people became in France the object of prosecutions as a [specific] minority group", as opposed to being covered by general legislation against vagrancy. (Clébert : 89, 90). Less than a decade after issuing this declaration, Louis was to make use of Gypsy incendiaries to burn Prague.

Although the 1682 measures were repeated in 1740, by this time the Gypsies were not to be expelled but were commanded "to take jobs, to put themselves in a fit condition to serve in them, or to go to work cultivating the land, or engage in other kinds of work or in trades of which they are capable". (quoted Clébert : 90).

Measures against Gypsies in Britain generally matched those in force against vagrancy, although a Scottish law of 1609 - offering Gypsies the alternative of banishment or death - resulted in a temporary spate of mutilations and executions.

In 1627 there was inaugurated a policy of pressing the gypsies for military service abroad . . . but they offered armed resistance to the attempts to impress them, and some took refuge in Ireland.

(Tinkers in Scotland : 7).

Thereafter the expedient of transporting Gypsies to the labour-starved colonies was more commonly adopted, as it was by the other western European colonial powers, in this way continuing the Gypsy diaspora, in particular to the Americas and Australasia.

Special anti-Gypsy legislation fell into disuse during the eighteenth century and "the last trial in which the charge of being Egyptians formed part of the indictment was . . . in 1770". (Simson : 133).

The situation in Prussia was exacerbated by the Thirty Years' War and its protracted aftermath. In an attempt to deter vagrants and Gypsies from entering his kingdom, Frederick William (1713-1740) erected signs depicting gallows on the frontiers to warn them of the consequences. (Horváthová : 57). In desperation, "since arrest meant death anyhow, some

German Gypsies formed themselves into combat groups for self-preservation. One of the biggest confrontations occurred in 1722 when a thousand armed Gypsies, bringing with them a light artillery, fought a battle against regular soldiers". (Kenrick and Puxon : 47).

Later in the eighteenth century the persecution of Gypsies was abandoned in favour of attempts to settle them, as had become the practice in the neighbouring Hapsburg lands.



The Czech Lands and Slovakia in the Age of Darkness.

The advent of capitalism was greatly retarded under the Hapsburg rule throughout the Empire's central European lands but the pattern of Gypsy development in the Czech lands resembles that of other western European countries during this period, although the policy reversal from persecution to a degree of tolerance in the mid-eighteenth century was more dramatic than elsewhere. The savagery of the late seventeenth century measures was unmatched in Europe at the time, with the possible exception of Prussia, and was succeeded by the benevolent yet determined assimilatory attempt of Empress Maria Theresa. Meanwhile events in Slovakia and the rest of Hungary, although reflecting the turmoil in the Czech and German lands to the west, represented a continuation of the previous 'eastern' development.

The period of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century is known to Czechs as the 'Age of Darkness' for the disastrous defeat at White Mountain near Prague in 1620 marked the beginning of three centuries of subjugation under Austrian rule, while the subsequent Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) left the country in a state of utter devastation. The economy was shattered, about a third of agricultural land lay uncultivated, plague and famine were rife and the population in Bohemia stood at only half its pre-war level.

During these troubled years the great lords had increased their landholdings from a third (before 1620) to nearly two thirds of all the Czech lands and the conditions of the remaining serfs rapidly worsened as these landowners tried to compensate for the labour shortage by raising the labour rent ('robota') from three to nine days a year (before 1620) to a massive three to five days a week. (Atlas : 19). These increased



demands sparked off widespread peasant uprisings in 1680, 1695, 1711, 1713 and 1732, which were violently suppressed by imperial troops and answered by corvée edicts confirming the serfs' loss of rights in 1680, 1717 and 1738.

In the aftermath of war those uprooted from their homes, runaway serfs and discharged soldiers wandered the roads of central Europe as beggars and vagabonds or else formed "a network of robber bands some of which persisted for at least another century". (Hobsbawm : 22). Some Gypsy groups also gained their livelihood from armed robbery, continuing in this way of life until well into the eighteenth century. (Horváthová : 56).

To complicate still further the internal difficulties of the Czech lands there was a threat of foreign invasion by the French; meanwhile the Turks mounted fresh and more menacing attacks, seizing the southern part of Slovakia and then penetrating south Moravia in 1683.

This same period could well be called the 'Age of Darkness' by the Gypsies too, for, as part of the general attempt to re-establish order throughout the Czech lands, determined efforts were made to exterminate them if they could not be expelled. The first of a new wave of expulsion decrees was issued in 1645, three years before the end of the War, but this seems to have been as ineffectual as its predecessors. Indeed Gypsies served in royal armies during the War, at the same time that legislation to expel them was in force. This had happened before and possibly existing legislation was used occasionally as a threat to press them to enlist.

In 1688 Leopold I banished Gypsies once more and a year later the proviso was added that every Gypsy who did not leave within three days would be hung without mercy. This followed the arrest of incendiaries,

including Gypsies, who had set fire to Prague on the orders of the French King Louis XIV.\* (Šmerglová : 50).

Leopold eventually outlawed Gypsies in 1697. Although similar legislation in the sixteenth century had been followed by the sporadic killing of some Gypsies, this could not compare with the slaughter resulting from the 1697 decree. Statistics are not available but accounts tell that whole groups were hung, shot or drowned and, especially along frontier roads, their corpses were hung from wayside trees as a warning to any other Gypsies who might think of entering the country. Later, signs were erected, as in Prussia, at state and regional frontiers depicting a gallows and bearing the inscription : "This is the penalty for Gypsies entering Bohemia". These signs were still widespread on Moravian and Silesian highroads in 1721. (Šmerglová : 50,51).

Another law of 1721 decreed that Gypsy women too should be killed and their children placed in orphanages but an amendment of five years later decreed that youths and girls were to be mutilated instead. In Bohemia the right ear was to be cut off, in Moravia the left, but should they return a second time they were to be put to death. (Horváthová : 60, 61).

Conditions in Slovakia, as in the Czech lands, deteriorated rapidly during the seventeenth century as a consequence of the Thirty Years' War. These difficulties were aggravated further by an influx of vagrants and nomadic Gypsies fleeing the stringent pacification measures of the Czech lands and beyond, which provoked retaliatory legislation. Regional

---

\* Similarly in Slovakia, Gypsies were arrested for setting fire to Potok in 1676 and it was discovered that a French spy had lived nine years among them and planned to burn down nearby strongholds. (Horváthová : 106).

authorities passed numerous decrees expelling Gypsies from towns, villages and from the region on the grounds that they were robbers, smugglers, plague-carriers, horse-thieves, counterfeiterers and beggars.

However there was a significant difference in the scale and purpose of repression in the Czech lands and Slovakia which is well illustrated by the signs erected on the borders of both countries depicting the execution of Gypsies. In the Czech lands this fate awaited any Gypsy who entered the country, while in Slovakia the threat was to "all nomadic Gypsies who did not settle within three weeks of entering Slovakia". (Horváthová : 113).

This differential treatment of Gypsies cannot be explained by greater devastation suffered by the Czech lands, for Slovakia too was a constant battleground in the triangular struggle between Turks, Hapsburg and Hungarians, a situation complicated still further by peasant risings and banditry.

With the eventual defeat of the Turks, the Hapsburg troops were withdrawn from Hungary but this only created the chance for further disturbances for:

. . . the landowners who made up the Hungarian nation were determined to escape the fate of Bohemia : liberated from the Turks, they rebelled against the Habsburgs and in 1707 deposed their Habsburg king. The battle of the White Mountain was not, however, repeated at their expense; the Habsburg forces were fully engaged in the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13) and could not be diverted to subduing the Hungarian nobles.

(Taylor : 16).

The inevitable economic disruption and breakdown of law and order during such tumultuous times provided the motive and the opportunity for peasant bandits groups, as well as for marauding gangs of professional robbers among which were Gypsy gangs. This was the heroic age of peasant



resistance and the legendary Janošík, a bandit executed in 1713, is still remembered in folk song, dance and costume.

Considering the times it is indeed strange that severer measures against Gypsies were not adopted as in the neighbouring Czech lands. The explanation lies in the way Gypsies were seen, which in turn derived from their different pattern of historical development.

In the Czech lands to be a Gypsy was inevitably to be nomadic and probably unknown to the authorities, more seriously it was to be labelled automatically as a worthless and dangerous vagabond or robber and therefore liable to immediate execution.

Meanwhile, although adopting comparable regulations to expel all Gypsies, the Slovakian authorities applied them selectively to allow known and useful groups (often settled) to remain, while forcibly ejecting suspect newcomers. In 1691, for example, the Novohrad authority (central Slovakia) decided that Gypsies already settled could remain, provided they remained in one place and obeyed their 'vojvody', who were responsible to the regional deputy governor for the good conduct of their groups.

The economic basis for this policy difference is evident from contemporary documents listing professions of settled Gypsies (e.g. smiths, musicians, basket-, trough- and brush-makers, and exceptionally lime-kiln workers and quarrymen) but, equally importantly, showing the spread of taxation of Gypsies both by regional (i.e. state) and district (i.e. feudal) authorities. (Horváthová: 103, 104).

In 1734 in the district of Trebišov (east Slovakia), for example, lived twenty-two Gypsy families under their vajdove Peter and Ferencz. They appear to have been nomadic although only within the boundaries of



the district, owning eleven carts and twenty-two horses (Ferencz alone owning seven horses). One family even owned a pair of oxen, which was unusual for Gypsies.

Their duties towards the district were already firmly established. In general they made a living as itinerant smiths but regularly once a week, one family was required to go to the town of Trebišov to work metal, while at harvest time they had to carry water to the fields. At Easter the whole group had the pleasanter duty of purchasing a barrel of wine from the district. (ibid. : 112).

Elsewhere taxation was made by regional authorities on behalf of the state entirely in money form rather than in services. In 1731 in the Gemerská region (east Slovakia) Gypsy families possessing a tent, horse and cart were taxed two gold pieces annually, whilst those without horse and cart had to pay one gold piece. Evidently these heavy taxes were collected, even from relatively poor Gypsies. In 1738 twenty-eight Gypsy families shared sixteen tents in the Sirk district (Gemerská region) and paid a total of forty-three gold pieces.

It would be a mistake to see this progressive taxation as an example of specifically anti-Gypsy legislation for during this period in Slovakia there was a great increase in the burden of all tax-payers (i.e. commoners, for one of the zealously defended privileges of the nobility in Hungary was exemption from state taxes). Previously only those with possessions worth at least ten gold pieces were taxed but in 1737 this threshold was lowered to six gold pieces. At the same time the annual tax of one gold piece was doubled, so that it was possible for a commoner to pay up to a third of the value of his possessions in taxes each year. (Horváthová : 113).

The special, flat -rate taxation of all Gypsies was probably an administrative solution to the considerable problem of assessing the taxable value of Gypsy possessions.

### The Age of Enlightenment.

As a consequence of their effective rebellion at the start of the century, the Hungarian nobility had been able to conclude an advantageous peace, the terms of which were again confirmed by the Pragmatic Sanction of 1723. In return for recognising the Hapsburg monarch and the nominal unity of the Empire,

Hungary preserved its feudal Diet, its separate existence, and privileges of its landed class. Above all, it preserved the 'comitat', the institution unique in Europe, of autonomous local government. Habsburg administration stopped at the Hungarian frontier; Hungary, even in periods of absolutism, was administered by elected committees of the country gentry, and these would never operate measures which ran against their privileges.

(Taylor : 17).

Two humiliating military defeats at the hands of Prussia, a state with only a third of the treasury and a sixth of the population of Austria, "precipitated two drastic bouts of reforms within the Hapsburg state under [the Empress] Maria Theresa . . . with the aim of renovating the whole apparatus of government". (Anderson : 318).

However, the continued autonomy of the Hungarian lands was to frustrate her sustained endeavour during the latter half of the century to refashion the disparate Hapsburg lands into a modern, centralised state, thus translating the legal unity proclaimed by the Sanction into

a reality. Hungary managed to resist the centralising pressures and retain its separate Chancery, its local administration and the immunity of its nobility from imperial taxation. To raise money from her Hungarian lands, Maria Theresa was forced to resort to a variety of indirect means.

Hungary was treated economically as an Austrian colony in mercantilist fashion. Since the Hungarian landowners paid no taxes, money was extracted from Hungary by heavy taxes on goods imported into Hungary from the other Habsburg dominions; and, to maintain the yield of these taxes, Hungary was prevented from importing from elsewhere or manufacturing goods herself. This system suited the Hungarian aristocrats; the impoverishment of their country was a small price to pay for the maintenance of their privileged position.

(Taylor : 19).

In the Czech lands the Bohemian Chancellery was abolished and replaced by a new bureaucracy in Vienna which appointed its own agents (Kreishauptmann) in the Czech lands and Austria to enforce central justice and administration independently of the provincial Diets of local gentry. (Anderson : 318).

Relatively a minor part of the overall rationalisation of her realm, Maria Theresa's ambitious plan to settle all Gypsies was none the less momentous for it represented a complete reversal of the policy of expulsion and extermination that had been followed undeviatingly by all her Habsburg predecessors. In fact, it had been during the reign of Ferdinand I, the first Habsburg to rule over the Czech lands, that the Congress of Augsburg had declared the murder of a Gypsy to be no crime, in this way initiating two centuries of Gypsy persecution. (Šmerglová : 44).

In place of eliminating Gypsies forcibly, Maria Theresa hoped to achieve a final solution of the perennial 'Gypsy problem' by assimilating



them into the peasantry and transforming them into productive workers and taxpayers. Although the measures adopted seem intolerably repressive by present-day standards they were enlightened for the times, being founded on the belief that integration of these ethnic pariahs could only be accomplished by firm steps to ensure their effective settlement, employment and education. The settlement policy was a dramatic departure from previous practice in the Czech lands but was, in principle, compatible with long-term developments in the Hungarian lands, which included Slovakia. It could even be regarded, with some justification, as the attempted acceleration of an already existing trend by means of rational planning and control. As such the policy offered a 'prima facie' hope of success in those areas inhabited by the vast majority of Gypsies, whereas the prospects in the more thinly populated Czech and German lands were problematic.

This systematic attempt to integrate Gypsies into eighteenth century society is described in some detail for it is fascinating in its own right as well as in the uncanny resemblance it sometimes bears to its counterpart in Czechoslovakia two hundred years later, both as regards the plan and the reasons for its failure.

Until the mid-18th century Gypsies generally came under the jurisdiction of the centrally appointed regional governor, although even in the 17th century many groups of mainly settled Gypsies had already become the responsibility of local gentry. In 1758 the Imperial Governor's Council in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, issued a decree that all Gypsies should henceforth come under the direct jurisdiction of the noblemen on whose lands they lived. Nomadic Gypsies should seek a lord and any not so doing were to be expelled. Again in 1760 the Council instructed noblemen and bailiffs of Imperial estates to allow Gypsies, who had as yet no permanent residence, to enter serfs' villages.



This Council, first established in 1723 following the Sanction, was to remain the main instrument of Maria Theresa and later of her son and successor, Joseph II, for overall administration of Gypsy affairs, sending frequent instructions to local Diets and receiving from them in return detailed progress reports. From 1758 onwards until the death of Joseph II in 1790 the Council pursued a consistent policy advocating the settlement and employment of all Gypsies; but it left the local gentry and their Diets responsible for on-the-spot implementation.

The main programme for assimilating the Gypsies throughout the Hapsburg lands was contained in the 1761 legislation that sought the swift destruction of their previous ways of life by a series of wide-ranging measures. Gypsies were prohibited from leading a nomadic life, from living in huts and tents, from owning horses and horse-dealing, from having their own leaders, from eating carrion, from wearing outlandish clothes and even from speaking their own Romani language.

Instead they were to settle in towns and villages; living in houses, working and dressing like the peasants they were hopefully shortly to become. To mark the change - that Gypsies no longer existed as such - they were renamed 'Neubauern' (new farmers) or 'Ujmagyar' (new Hungarians) and individually were required to adopt a "Christian" name (i.e. surname and forename) like other people. (Davidová : 20; Horváthová, 118-9).

The same measures were repeated in stricter form in 1773 and again by Joseph II in 1782, with the addition that Gypsies were not to be given permission to marry unless they could prove their capacity to provide for a wife and children. Most stringent of all was the provision that where there were doubts that the children would receive a disciplined and Christian upbringing, they were to be taken forcibly from their

parents and fostered by the families of Catholic farmers or artisans to safeguard their spiritual and moral welfare and so that they might learn agricultural work or a trade. In such cases the parents were not allowed to visit their children and should they attempt this they were to be beaten or imprisoned.

Foster parents were to be paid twelve gold pieces annually for a boy under twelve and a girl under ten years of age and four pieces for a girl between ten and fourteen. Girls over fourteen were to work as servants in the houses of gentry, burghers or farmers while sturdy boys over sixteen were to be enlisted as soldiers. Boys between twelve and sixteen or physically weak older boys were to be enrolled with a guild to serve as apprentices. The Guilds were required to accept young Gypsies without objections and were held responsible for them by the local authorities.

The new houses were to be built on plots provided by their masters among the houses of non-Gypsies and the towns and villages were required to assist in their construction, financed by the local Diets. The previous huts of the Gypsies were to be destroyed and those Gypsies who attempted to remain were to be forcibly removed to ordinary houses. Gypsies previously living in the woods and mountains were to be moved to the plains to limit their opportunities for concealment and possible thieving.

More than one family was forbidden to share the same house for the stated reasons of diminishing the numerous feuds among Gypsies and reducing the possibility of incest. After the measure of forcibly removing Gypsy children had been abandoned, children of different sexes were required to sleep in separate rooms.

In place of their previous leaders Gypsies resettled in villages were placed under the authority of the village headman, who was also responsible for their regular church attendance and their morals, for earlier decrees had required Gypsies to marry in church and remain with their lawful spouses. Gypsies could only leave their village with a pass issued by the village headman or a higher authority, and should they neglect to obtain this the penalty was imprisonment.

As well as the important educative influence of the Church and close contact with non-Gypsies, work in itself was intended to play an important transforming role. All Gypsies previously unemployed, both men and women, were to work in the fields. Local Diets were also to use them for public works such as road repairs, ditching, bridge-building etc. The Diets had to take particular care "that no Gypsy wasted time on music. Whenever he had nothing to do and even his master had no work for him, he was to serve another for wages". If he worked badly he was to suffer corporal punishment. (Horváthová : 119-123).

It is very difficult to make an accurate assessment of the effects of the settlement plan, not for lack of data but because of its unreliability. Although local Diets provided frequent progress reports to the Imperial Council in Bratislava, these are suspect. J.H. Schwicker has pointed out what can only be explained as deliberate discrepancies between crude census figures compiled by local Diets and the amended totals supplied to the Council. In the originals the numbers of Gypsies listed as beggars, thieves, musicians and nomads were higher, and those listed as peasants correspondingly lower, than in the final versions. In many cases there is a suspicious absence of crude totals. According to the regulations the gentry were expected to visit all the Gypsies



settled on their lands every three months and report to the Diet on progress in assimilating them. In practice,

. . . at best they entrusted this task to the village headmen, asking them for the required information. In answer to the Imperial Council's questions . . . the Diets for the most part automatically indicated a level of assimilation that they felt would be judged as acceptable, even when the situation was far from satisfactory.

(Horváthová : 124).

On the other hand numerous court records confirm that vigorous action was often taken to fulfil straightforward regulations that involved little expense. Speaking Romani and eating carrion were punishable by twenty-four strokes of the rod and the more serious offences of bigamy and concubinage were usually dealt with in a similar way, as the following trial attests.

[In 1771], Juraj Mika . . . was found guilty of living with a Gypsy women without being married to her and by whom he had children. The court sentenced him to sixty strokes of the rod. His wife was also brought before the court and when asked why she lived with a man without being married to him, answered that she loved him. It appears that this honest answer angered the judges for they gave her a harsh sentence - thirty days in prison and thirty lashes.

(Horváthová : 117).

Most writers on the subject consider the settlement attempt to have been a failure and, leaving to one side the question of problematic official statistics, there are certainly good reasons why the policy was unlikely to succeed. At the outset it antagonised those whose support was vital for its success. Nor was this just a matter of clumsy 'social engineering' for, given the sharply conflicting class interests within the Empire of that period, it is difficult to see any way in which a plan to settle Gypsies would not have become yet another counter in the



continuing struggle between the Habsburg throne and the gentry, between central administration and local authorities.

Although landowners might have been expected to welcome the prospect of new labour-power and feudal rent, they would only attain this if nomadic Gypsies could be successfully settled and put to work. The initial prohibitively high costs (new housing and training, as well as regular payments to foster parents of Gypsy children) were to be met entirely by the landowners' Diets, while the first rewards went to the Imperial coffers in the form of the state tax payable by commoners. In view of these factors it is likely that many gentry made a careful assessment of investment prospects before trying to settle groups of nomadic Gypsies; those who appeared a bad risk were simply moved on, despite Council instructions to admit them to the serfs' villages.

In evading their responsibilities the gentry were safe in the knowledge that, in its co-ordinating rather than executive role, the Imperial Council was in no position to exercise adequate control of their Diets. Indeed the Council could only evaluate their performance on the basis of evidence that these Diets chose to supply. In this way the very authorities designated as the main agents of the policy were probably its most effective opponents.

The lack of enthusiasm shown by landowners was matched, for similar reasons, by that of artisans with whom Gypsy youths were to serve apprenticeships.

Guild masters defended themselves by every means possible from taking Gypsy apprentices. They pleaded to the Diets that business was so bad that they could not train even their own sons, let alone apprentices from outside. Even when some master was forced to accept Gypsies, usually they did not remain long, escaping at the first opportunity.

Understandably the masters did not demand their return, rather the opposite - they helped them escape.

(Horváthová : 124).

Nor can the policy have had great appeal for many Gypsies. The forcible nature of many of the measures were unlikely to persuade such a people, with its deep historical experience of persecution, that a new era of integration had arrived. On settling those things dearest to them - their homes, their animals, their music, their language and above all their children - were immediately taken from them. In their place they found the dreary routine of peasant life, burdened with feudal rent, taxes and the constant threat of beatings.

After arranging such a traumatic beginning to the Gypsies' settled life, the planners,

wanted to achieve great success in a short time. They did not even consider the fact that the Gypsies had lived a quite different life for many centuries and a few years were insufficient to change completely their previous way of life.

(Horváthová : 123).

The strength of their attachment to what would appear to an outsider an utterly wretched existence, is evident from a 1775 report from the vicinity of Bratislava.

New houses were built for them in the town and they were moved into them. The huts and shacks outside the town where they had previously lived were destroyed. As soon as they could the Gypsies escaped from the new houses and returned to their demolished huts.

(Horváthová : 124).

There is also evidence to support the reasonable supposition that many Gypsies tried to escape the measures. Schwicker argued that after 1781 the census returns show a marked rise in Gypsy population for those regions more lax in enforcing the policy (Mainly in south-west Slovakia) and a decrease where Diets were stricter (including Spiš). (Horváthová : 135).

As well as the nomads, those Gypsies already settled opposed the policy since they saw any increase in numbers in their own locality as a threat to their precarious social position and livelihood too, through increased competition. They occasionally petitioned Diets to move bands of nomadic Gypsies from the district, usually with justifying accusations of theft.

Yet despite this widespread opposition, it is clear that many nomads did settle and that many already settled Gypsies were moved to towns and villages during this period. Also, even though Hungary was relatively autonomous, local Diets still felt it advisable to make a show of conforming to the Council's instructions, at least to the extent of submitting reports and statistics, albeit falsified. This was especially true of the 1780s when Joseph II made a determined effort to bring Hungary finally under the rule of German bureaucrats (Taylor : 20).

In giving a generalised survey of this period it is necessary to bear in mind that local conditions varied greatly and for this reason a more concrete idea of Gypsy settlement can be gained from local census data. This is not complete but indicates that in the early 1780s there were possibly 2,500 Gypsy families settled on Slovakian territory (i.e. 10,000 to 12,000 persons), with over half of these concentrated in the rich Danube plain and lower Vah valley in the south-west. (Horváthová : 125-133). As might be expected many Gypsies were employed as agricultural labourers in these flatter, wheat-growing areas, while in the more mountainous northern and eastern regions artisan work predominated.

The range of contemporary conditions was considerable as is evident from the neighbouring Spišská\* and Gemerská regions in eastern Slovakia.

---

\* The region of the 1969-71 fieldwork (see Chapter 7 et seq.).



The 1775 census of Spis<sup>v</sup> showed 197 scattered families, with only one or two families per village; exceptions were Monsek with thirteen, Smizany<sup>v</sup> with nine and Helcmanovce with eight. Settlement was denser in the more mountainous and industrial south (146 families) than in the poorer north (51 families). The Gypsies appear to have been relatively integrated for all the families were said to live in houses, obey the village headman, not deal in horses or eat carrion, and almost all the families paid taxes of around one gold piece annually. More than three-quarters dressed in peasant fashion.

The great majority of families gained their main livelihood as smiths (146) but a significant minority as musicians (34), while only very few as agricultural labourers (5). One family alone were listed as beggars! In the 1780s the Spis<sup>v</sup> Diet considered establishing a large workshop, where Gypsy smiths would make and repair implements for the region's important iron-ore mines, but in spite of the personal interest shown in the scheme by Joseph II, it was never realised.

Of the Gypsies' 456 children, 124 remained at home with their parents for stated reasons like deafness, debility and epilepsy, while others were taken away from their parents. Ninety-five boys and 97 girls worked as servants, 21 boys learnt a trade and three were enlisted as soldiers. Only three girls attended school.

In contrast the neighbouring Gemerská region reported 275 Gypsy families in 1776 of which only one lived in a house in the village and the remainder in huts or tents (29 families) outside the villages. The main occupations were smiths, musicians, agricultural labourers and beggars. The majority still dressed "in Gypsy fashion", ate carrion and dealt in horses and although taxed, paid little because of their poverty. All of the children were left with their parents.



Possibly these different reports reveal more about the attitudes of the respective local authorities than they do about the actual conditions of the Gypsies living in their regions.

In the Czech lands the plight of the Gypsies had not altered immediately with the accession of Maria Theresa in 1740 for although their outlaw status was revoked in 1744 unsettled conditions in the wake of another war prompted the 1749 Imperial Patent "on expelling Gypsies, vagrants and foreign beggars from the land". However, when the full settlement policy was applied to the indigenous nomadic Gypsy population a decade later it is probable that their numbers, at all times relatively small, were considerably below the former levels, since Gypsies had regularly fled eastwards throughout the previous hundred years to escape successive waves of persecution.

In most cases the authorities in the Czech lands must have been too pre-occupied with the resistance of the serfs to their crushing conditions to pursue any major integration of Gypsies into the peasantry during the late eighteenth century. As well as being subject to rent and heavy labour obligation, serfs were often not allowed to marry, seek employment outside their estate, or send their children to study without the permission of the lord. (Salzmann : 5). After a quarter of a million people, or one tenth of the population of Bohemia, had died of famine or disease following crop failures in the early 1770s, the mounting unrest culminated in the widespread uprisings of 1775. Although the rebellion was suppressed militarily within two months, Maria Theresa granted a "general pardon" and thereafter sought to abolish the labour obligation and to redistribute manorial land to the peasantry. "The noble land-owners, jealously guarding their privileges, were anything but co-operative

in this effort and managed to frustrate whatever constructive moves the government initiated" to such an extent that the reforms "could be carried out only on estates under state control". (ibid : 7, 8).

Joseph II managed to abolish labour obligation throughout the Empire in 1789 but this reform was short-lived and the final emancipation of the serfs (including many Gypsies) only came with the revolutions of 1848. However Joseph's guarantee of peasants' security of tenure remained in force, as did his restriction against the transfer of peasants' land to the nobility. "His principal motive was, no doubt, to prevent the increase of 'dominical' land, which paid less taxes and in Hungary none; the effect, none the less, was to preserve [a landholding] peasantry . . . and, paradoxically, the great aristocracy . . . [for with the] shift to a money economy . . . the great nobles received large sums and turned capitalist with them". (Taylor : 21).

For all their greater control of local government in the Czech lands, the Hapsburgs' Gypsy policy proved insufficient, in itself, to reverse the previous nomadic trend and when the policy eventually lapsed with the death of Joseph II in 1790, Gypsies continued to wander much as they had before. There were some isolated successes in settling Gypsies, particularly in south Moravia (Nováček : 19, 86) and it is significant that the leaders of the emerging Czech Gypsy - Rom Association of the late 1960s were descended from inhabitants of these settlements.

As this historical account shows, the reasons why the Hapsburg Gypsy policy failed are many and varied. Were adequate and reliable evidence available a fuller sociological explanation would require a thorough analysis of the conflicting interests of the principal social

elements involved - monarchy, gentry, peasantry and Gypsies - and, in addition, a study of the manipulation of the politico-economic levers at the disposal of the agents of the two most powerful contestants, the Imperial bureaucracy and the feudal Diets.

Yet even from this brief examination it is evident that the reduction of such a many-sided struggle to the most commonly accepted stereotyped explanation - of well-intentioned but uncomprehending government action thwarted by uncompromising Gypsy 'traditionalism' - is to ignore and distort its complexity. Clébert's simplistic assessment, that "Maria Theresa had very good feelings [but] . . . a complete lack of understanding in regard to Gypsies and their way of life" (Clébert : 102), follows from his pre-conceived belief in inherent Gypsy nomadism but takes little account of actual conditions in the Hungarian lands where the prevalent trend was for Gypsies to settle and yet where further settling of nomads was resisted by those Gypsies already established in an attempt to prevent erosion of their social and market position. More importantly, it overlooks the practical considerations behind the policy, for, allowing Maria Theresa her 'good feelings', her efforts can also be seen on a different level as yet another move in the long drawn-out struggle by the Hapsburgs to establish central control over their Empire and, particularly in the case of their wayward Hungarian lands, to extract increased revenue at the expense of the gentry.

Perhaps the least misleading of all the simplifications possible is that the policy failed because the two main social elements essential to its success, the gentry and the Gypsies, were on the whole hostile and against their opposition the Kreishauptmann in the Czech lands and



the Imperial Council in the Hungarian lands were both powerless to impose the imperial will. However this was no isolated defeat but rather only part of the Hapsburgs' general failure to impose a comprehensive range of reforms. For while the independence of the monarchy and its bureaucracy from the landowning aristocracy made possible the adoption of government policies against the interests of this ruling class, notably land reform, it was this same separation that led irrevocably to the downfall of these policies since they could not be adequately enforced.

Internally, the social laws of nature of the absolutist state rigorously reasserted themselves, in an eloquent demonstration of the impotence of the personal will of the ruler, once it transgressed the collective interests of the class which Absolutism historically functioned to defend.

(Anderson : 321).

The Hapsburg attempts to settle Gypsies were the most extensive and systematic ever undertaken but they were not unique; elsewhere in Europe at this time there were comparable developments. In Prussia Frederick II tried to establish Gypsy colonies; in Russia Katherine II attempted by force to settle nomadic Gypsies as serfs on royal estates in 1783 (Horváthová : 57); while in Spain Charles III "wishing to imitate Maria Theresa" . . . called Gypsies 'neo-Castilians' in an edict of 1783. (Clébert : 118).

So far it has been argued that the pattern of Gypsy development in eastern Europe has been quite different, on the whole, from that in western Europe. However the case of Spain would appear to contradict this broad generalisation for although geographically part of western Europe, the development of Spanish Gypsies resembled the eastern rather than the western pattern in many important aspects. While there have always been many nomadic Gypsies in Spain, there was also early

settlement and from the sixteenth century special quarters (gitanerías) were set aside for them, especially in the towns and villages of the rural, undeveloped southern province of Andalucía. Also the policy of Charles III, described by Clébert as in imitation of Maria Theresa, was more a continuation of previous policy, for legislation in Spain traditionally required Gypsies to settle and integrate rather than quit the country.

On closer examination Spain appears less of an anomaly for linked with this un-western Gypsy development were broader ethnic and economic features more characteristic of eastern Europe. Like Austro-Hungary, the Spanish state was formed as a conglomerate of distinct Christian kingdoms and peoples in the face of an Islamic threat to overrun them and yet the completion of the reconquest (in 1492) did not lead to ethnic amalgamation. Nor did economic development result in the formation of a homogeneous nation-state for, in spite of its position as an early colonial power, Spain stagnated economically from the sixteenth century onwards and only started on a path of capitalist development late in the nineteenth century.

Possibly the isolated example of Spain is the exception which, while insufficiently documented to prove the rule, at least strengthens the case that among the complex of factors that undoubtedly played a part in determining whether Gypsies remained nomadic or settled, the mode of economic development and state formation were probably predominant.

PART TWO - THE MODERN AGE.The Appearance of a 'Modern' Gypsy Policy in Western Europe.

During the heightened repression in western Europe many Gypsies had altered their economic patterns in response to the worsening conditions. Among the survivors a perceptible occupational shift had taken place during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The early Gypsy arrivals had been generally entertainers of one sort or another, but these were gradually replaced by another generic occupational group - petty craftsmen - who worked in metal, horn and wood. This kind of work was by no means unknown before among western European Gypsies but now it attained a new ascendancy, having the advantage that it was more demonstrably 'useful' and productive than entertainment.

For the most part these Gypsies remained nomadic; indeed their dispersed clientele and, in some cases, the restrictions laid on them by their competitors often made the continuance of nomadism by small family groups an economic necessity. In places their new intrusion into artisan trades was resisted by the vanishing guilds but, as had happened in the Balkans and Danube lands, a compromise was found in restricting Gypsies to less profitable work.

At least in France . . . guilds were organised and powerful enough to prohibit . . . [Gypsy] competition. In the eighteenth century, for example, royal enactments regulated the conditions of those working as tin- and coppersmiths and as makers of kitchen utensils. An edict of 1735 declared . . . [unqualified smiths] were permitted only 'to plate and repair pieces . . . at the doors and in the houses of the particular people to whom the said pieces belong'.

This order had a double effect : on the one hand, it prevented the Gypsies from settling as artisan-smiths . . . and, on the other, it offered them the



possibility of engaging in an officially approved kind of work without thereby breaking their nomad circumstances. Very quickly the work done by the itinerant tinsmith,oppersmith and metal-plater tacitly became a Gypsy monopoly and remained so until the recent advent of mass-produced goods.

(Clébert : 134).

Elsewhere the guilds had succumbed to expanding industrialisation and in Britain some Gypsies were able to expand their trade to a point where settling became advantageous, as in the instance of the Gypsy foundry near St. Andrews in the late eighteenth century.

On the whole, however, western European Gypsies responded to industrialisation in the nineteenth century by seeking viable niches particularly in the periphery, as yet imperfectly served by the expanding road and rail networks, and it was not until late in the century that improved communications at last brought mass-produced goods, better and cheaper than the equivalent Gypsy-ware, within easy reach of all.

After the making of horn-spoons went out, the [Gypsies] still turned out very servicable tin-ware from the sheets of tin that they bought, but about 1890 the import of cheap, mass-produced tin-ware began to kill this trade [in the Scottish Highlands].

(Grant : 249).

This spread of factory-made goods created a growing crisis in the Gypsy economy and as the first serious inroads co-incided with the general economic depression towards the end of the century, this made the initial impact all the more severe. (The eventual solution was to be yet another protracted occupational shift, this time to the collection of metal and other waste material for industrial recycling, which involved a corresponding population movement away from the periphery to the towns and cities that generated the waste and the industrial centres that reabsorbed it).

Perhaps these economic developments and associated demographic changes help to explain the mysterious official silence about Gypsies throughout western Europe for most of the nineteenth century until the 'Gypsy problem' re-emerged in its modern form almost simultaneously at the end of the century in a number of countries, diffused most probably by imitation. For perhaps a century, roughly from 1770 to 1870, the 'western' view of Gypsies as worthless pests had been muted, although by no means eradicated; thereafter it reasserted itself with growing acrimony.

The 'modern' policy to control nomadic Gypsies differed significantly from its predecessors. It neither sought to expel or exterminate them completely as in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, nor did it offer a comprehensive plan of integration in the spirit of Maria Theresa. Instead it seemed an altogether more piecemeal affair - an attempt to remove a relatively minor irritant, without recourse to unacceptably inhuman repression or expensive assistance, by means of persistent harassment. In place of governments legislating to drive Gypsies from their lands the pattern of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries was to be an extended war of attrition, waged by local authorities and their police forces,\* that would quietly wear down the Gypsies' resistance and eventually discourage them to the point that they would abandon their nomadic habits and simply disappear into the rural and urban proletariat.

This was the hope that led legislators to define Gypsies not as an ethnic community but in terms of a 'way of life'; once they had

---

\* Such a policy had been technically impossible on this scale until the advent of modern police forces in the nineteenth century.

relinquished nomadism and become regular wage-labourers they ceased to be regarded as Gypsies. (Such a procedure was to be justified later by the frequent allegation that most of the nomads in question were not 'authentic Gypsies' but degenerates and drop-outs : they did not correspond to the stereotype popularised by nineteenth century Romantic writers).

However western Europe's increasingly urban-based and consequently more visible Gypsies not only continued to travel during the twentieth century but aggravated the situation still further after the Second World War with their technological innovation of replacing horses and carts by lorries and caravans. This continuing concentration of motorised nomads on the outskirts of towns and cities eventually provoked a fresh outburst of official activity in the 1950s and 1960s as local authorities in France, Britain, Spain, Belgium and Italy sought to turn the tide of Gypsy urbanisation by forcible and often violent evictions. (viz. Puxon). This was to be the pattern of events all over western Europe during the twentieth century.

The adoption of a modern policy in Germany may have been prompted by an influx of Gypsies from the east during the latter part of the nineteenth century following the final liberation from slavery of the Rumanian Gypsies in 1864. (Panaiteŝcu : 61). However by the turn of the century Gypsy urbanisation was already a growing problem.

At this time larger numbers of Gypsies were gathering in the large towns which not only offered better work opportunities but more effective shelter from pursuit. Now Berlin, Frankfurt and Hamburg . . . became the characteristic Gypsy centres.

(Mode : 168).

Following the 1906 Decree on "Methods of Combat<sub>ing</sub> the Gypsy Nuisance" a card register was established in Munich containing names, fingerprints and other data about all the two thousand Gypsies in Germany.



Travelling was only allowed after the police had issued a nomad's pass which specified permitted routes. This pass had to be renewed annually and could be withdrawn at any time. In addition Gypsies could keep horses and dogs only if the police agreed and under no circumstances were they allowed bears or monkeys. Finally Gypsy youths over sixteen years old could be taken by the police and set to work, according to their age and capacities. (Block : 199).

After the First World War, when the Gypsies' numbers had increased to between six and eight thousand, new measures were introduced. (ibid:69). A 1925 decree sought to prevent further concentration of Gypsies, in the following year a nation-wide commission of the criminal police forces in Germany came to an agreement "on combating the Gypsy plague" and in 1928 a national law placed Gypsies under permanent police surveillance. (Mode : 168). Meanwhile the 1906 card register was updated continuously and this greatly eased the Nazis' task in herding German Gypsies into the concentration camps from which they were never to emerge. (Horváthová: 58).

Measures to register Gypsies in France came a little later than in Germany. The 1912 law regarded all Gypsies as vagrants and required them to carry a detailed pass which had to be stamped in each village and town through which the family passed. In addition to the usual details of name and date of birth this 'carnet anthropométrique' also listed:

The 'anthropometric' description of the bearer:  
height, chest measurement, breadth of head,  
bizygomatic diameter, length of right ear, length  
of fingers (left middle and little fingers),  
length from left middle finger to elbow, length  
of left foot, colour of eyes . . . finger prints  
and two photographs (full face and profile).

(Clébert : 257).

This law remained in force until 1969.

In late nineteenth century England mounting pressure to deal with Gypsies and other nomads of the road, spearheaded by the crusading efforts of George Smith of Coalville, did not result in German- and French-style legislation. The threat was averted largely by the formation of an opposing pressure group with parliamentary spokesmen, the Showmen's Guild which was founded in 1891 and whose membership included many Gypsies. (Acton : 111-120). Following the final defeat of the Moveable Dwellings Bill in 1894, local authorities in England were forced to counter Gypsy urbanisation by partial means such as bye-laws and injunctions and this uneasy situation continued until the conflict escalated sharply in the 1950s and 1960s.

Scotland represented a somewhat different example of a 'modern' Gypsy policy for overall legislation from the earlier period of repression still remained technically in force until 1906. However the 1609 Act, under which 'all Egyptians are to be banished on pain of death and those who harbour them imprisoned', was far too drastic for nineteenth century use and so authorities resorted to indirect means of whittling away various freedoms to make life unbearable on the road.

The Trespass (Scotland) Act 1865 and the Roads and Bridges (Scotland) Act 1878 were designed to prohibit camping . . . The Prevention of Crimes Act 1871, the Burgh Police Act 1892 and the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1908 were directed against 'persons wandering abroad'. The Public Health (Scotland) Act 1897 [allowed] local authorities to make bye-laws on the habitable conditions of tents, vans and sheds. . . and the Children Act 1908 . . . made it an offence for children to be inadequately clothed, fed, lodged or medically attended. Finally Section 118 of that Act compelled itinerants to put their children to school from October to March and to be able to produce certificates of a minimum of 200 attendances. Offenders were to have their children taken away and put into an 'industrial school'.

(Fullerton : 2).

As in England no legislation directed specifically at Gypsies was enacted but a 1906 Government Committee recommended that they should be put into labour colonies. This proposal was rejected in a comprehensive 1918 Government Report which noted the annual winter drift to the towns of Scotland's 3,000-odd itinerants and suggested that each family "should have a house in a locality where a means of livelihood was available, such as farming, roadmending, quarrying or afforestation, ideally in the country". (Gentleman : 12). For all its distinctive features, then, the Scottish approach was typical of the piecemeal way that the 'modern' policy generally was used to deal with the new problem of changing Gypsy occupations and their movement to towns.

#### The Czech Lands and Slovakia in the Nineteenth Century.

Economic development in the Czech lands followed a distinctly western European pattern during the nineteenth century. At first there were setbacks when the Napoleonic Wars reached Moravia (the battle of Austerlitz) and produced an economic crisis in the Austrian lands, causing the currency to drop to a fifth of its former value, but the exclusion of England from the continental market during the Wars favoured the growth of Bohemian textiles. Thereafter industry expanded rapidly, in the towns and especially around the rich deposits of coking coal in northern Bohemia and northern Moravia. The final abolition of serfdom during the 1848 revolution released the peasants from their legal tie to the land and the country poor flocked to the towns where they were absorbed in the growing industrial proletariat. Eventually, by the time of the outbreak of the First World War, 75 per cent of Austro-Hungary's industrial capacity was concentrated in the Czech lands. (Straka : 69).



Against this background of industrialisation the Gypsies began to adapt as elsewhere in western Europe and consequently provoked a similar reaction from the authorities. This path of development was only cut short, as in Germany, by the Nazi gas-chambers.

Although there was little official mention of Gypsies in the early part of the nineteenth century, there are occasional glimpses of artisan Gypsies, wandering more or less unmolested.

Gypsies often visited the villages, the men selling chains, axes and gimlets, the women telling the fortunes of senseless women from cards or palms and casting spells.

(quoted Horváthová : 73).

However, as elsewhere in western Europe, they figured prominently in the Romantic literature of the time. The Romantic poet K.H. Mácha (1810-1836), whose work was central to the Czech national revival that gathered momentum later in the century, wrote a novel entitled 'Gypsies' and this probably played a similar role to the works of his French, British and German counterparts (Hugo, Gautier, Baudelaire, Borrow,\* Walter Scott and von Arnim) in forming "the myth of the child of Bohemia, the eternal wanderer". (Clébert : 123). Mácha's wandering Gypsy musicians of the title make their entrance singing:

Heaven's vault spreads o'er me a canopy blue,  
Beneath dancing clouds are tossed by the breeze,  
Today here at midnight - tomorrow bound southwards,  
To the east - to the west - my land it ne'er sees.

My nation lies scattered, unknown brothers spread wide,  
Lamenting I wander by hill, heath and burn.  
Not twice, only once am I destined to pass here,  
Eternally onward - ne'er more to return.

(Mácha : 189).

---

\* Borrow is the great exception since he alone of these writers had considerable experience of living with Gypsies. Nevertheless he romanticised them and was no less hostile than some of his more traditionally-minded Gypsy friends to current changes in nineteenth century English Gypsy society.

It may have been an influx of recently-freed Romanian Gypsies that prompted the Home Office regulations of 1887 and 1888 for expulsion of foreign Gypsies was their first concern. However a more fundamental causal factor was probably the general European economic slump of the late nineteenth century which led to widespread unemployment and emigration and undoubtedly to an increase in thefts of crops and poultry by indigenous nomadic Gypsies. At any rate the measures were wide-ranging and constituted a modern policy closely resembling that adopted in Germany two decades later.

The 1880s measures directed that foreign Gypsies be refused registration as residents and expelled from the country and that indigenous Gypsies who wandered without regular employment be prosecuted as vagrants, for which the penalty was compulsory labour.

Gypsies 'who can prove regular earnings' were to be issued with a nomad's pass specifying permitted routes. Each separate family in a band travelling together was to carry its own pass, which could be confiscated if any offence was committed. The police were to be informed immediately on the arrival of a nomadic group so that the passes could be examined and the Gypsies and their animals medically inspected. (Horváthová : 61-64).

These regulations remained in force until the First World War when an unsuccessful attempt was made to enlist Gypsies into the Imperial armies.

The economic development of Slovakia during the same period was quite different, mainly because

the unique political history of Hungary had produced a social result, remarkable in Europe, unique in the Hapsburg monarchy : the lesser landowners had survived. In Bohemia and the German lands there was nothing

between the great aristocrat and the peasant. In Hungary, out of a population of ten millions, half a million were 'nobles' . . . and the holdings of these squires ranged from large estates, almost on the scale of those of the magnates, to smallholdings, inferior to those of many peasants.

(Taylor : 30).

After the death of Joseph II in 1790, his successor abandoned the vain attempt to direct the internal administration of the Hungarian lands and, yielding to pressure from the Hungarian gentry, also revoked Joseph's recent abolition of the labour duty on which the well-being of this ruling class depended. Joseph's land reforms remained in force but these were effectively frustrated by the Hungarian Diets with their cherished autonomy once more restored. Under the control of the gentry the Hungarian lands consequently remained predominantly rural during the nineteenth century and while there was a little industrialisation (mainly mining) in eastern Slovakia, this bore no comparison to development in the Czech lands.

The first blow to the supremacy of the gentry did not appear to be such initially, for the 1848 Hungarian revolution put an end to the Imperial Sanction of 1723 and won Hungary dominion status, replacing the feudal Diet in Bratislava by a Parliament in Budapest. However, although the revolution was taken up by the gentry in Hungary, its groundswell was peasant discontent and as in the Prague and Vienna uprisings the abolition of serfdom was a successful revolutionary demand.

Another defeat of Austria at the hands of Prussia in 1866 gave Hungary the opportunity to consolidate still further its independence within the Empire but although the Hungarian gentry were able to reassert their political dominance through the long supremacy of the Liberal Party (1875-1905), they were powerless to prevent their own ruin and,



at the same time, that of those less fortunate sections of Hungarian society - peasants, artisans, Gypsies. There was no means of averting the collapse that engulfed the Hungarian lands' backward agricultural economy when the co-incidence of mass-produced grain in the United States and cheap transport (steamships and railways) finally put an end to Hungary's protected rural isolation.

"A series of bad harvests in the 'nineties were the last straw, followed as they were by a steady decline in agricultural prices, owing to over-production in the world market . . . . In the thirty years preceding 1905 the number of properties put up annually for sale as the result of bankruptcy grew from 9,600 to 21,100, . . . the number of persons engaged in agriculture decreased absolutely by about 80,000 (from 35 to 31%) and the floating agricultural population went up by leaps and bounds". (Seton Watson : 271).

The beneficiaries were the large landowners, the magnates who bought up the estates of the ruined lesser gentry.

"[They had] gained from the abolition of the [labour duty] and, capitalistically equipped, could weather the storm of world competition. Over one hundred thousand independent landowners vanished between 1867 and the end of the century; over one third of Hungary was in the hands of the magnates". (Taylor : 199).

The dispossessed gentry were saved from extinction by their continuing political power and the former squires entered, and soon commanded a monopoly in, government and civil service and the professions.

For the no less severely afflicted peasantry there was no easy solution. The usual resort of the rural poor was to abandon the countryside for the towns but stagnant Hungary had little urban industry to

absorb them. Indeed many pauperised peasants and artisans made their way to Vienna but they found that "towns increased faster than the industries which provided employment and goods; and as a consequence, their growth led to a declining standard of urban life. . . . In Vienna a 'proletariat' of landless labourers existed, but not yet the capitalists to employ them". (Taylor : 64).

The alternative to internal migration was emigration and they went in their hundreds of thousands, many to the country whose superior mode of production had brought about their downfall.

Over half a million Slovaks, nearly one-fourth of the population, emigrated to the United States in the quarter century preceding the First World War. Others streamed to Canada, South America and Russia.

(Straka : 77).

The predicament of the Gypsies was even grimmer for although having no land to be ruined in the same way as the lesser gentry and peasantry, they depended on these two classes for their livelihood and so shared their plight indirectly.

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century a substantial proportion of the Gypsies had worked as landless serf-labourers for the gentry but the emancipation of the serfs in mid-century threw them onto the open labour market at a time when conditions were deteriorating. As the recession deepened the Gypsies' former masters could no longer afford to employ them and when their estates passed to the magnates, these large landowners had little need of full-time unskilled Gypsy labour on their 'capitalistically equipped' farms, for their economic survival in the new competitive world depended on eradicating the inefficient, labour-intensive and feudalistic methods of their predecessors. There was a certain need for seasonal labour but

Gypsies must have often been excluded from even this limited employment by the competition of impoverished peasants.

Perhaps some Gypsies followed the peasants to the towns of Austro-Hungary and it may have been such internal migration and not an influx of Rumanian Gypsies that provoked the 1887 and 1888 regulations to expel 'foreign Gypsies' from the Austrian lands, but in any case this option was legally barred by the new measures. The other alternative, that of emigration, was even less of a practical possibility for the Gypsies since to emigrate required at least sufficient resources to pay the passage to the New World.\* So while the lesser gentry turned bureaucrat and the peasantry poured overseas, the lowest and most trapped of all sections of Hungarian society - the Gypsies - survived the economic crisis by reverting to their former trades of artisan and musician.

This account is supported by a comparison of late eighteenth century census statistics for four regions of Slovakia with large Gypsy populations (the 'župy' of Bratislava, Nitra, Trenčín and Spiš) with statistics for the same four regions a century later.\*\* While this data is not entirely reliable, for reasons given above in Part One of this chapter, the figures nevertheless show a dramatic and comprehensible drop in the proportion of male Gypsies employed as labourers and a corresponding rise in the proportion of smiths and musicians.

---

\* This was also true in the case of nineteenth century Ireland where the peasantry with more resources emigrated to the United States, while those with virtually none migrated internally, to Glasgow and Liverpool.

\*\* In 1893 these four regions contained over a third of Slovakia's Gypsy population and was representative of the national pattern for the limited purposes of this comparison. In fact the national proportion for Gypsy labourers was somewhat higher, but did not exceed 7%.



Changed Means of Subsistence of Male Gypsies in 4 Slovakian Regions.

(Late 18th century - Late 19th century).

|              | Smiths |       | Musicians |       | Labourers |       | Beggars |       | Others |       | Total |       |
|--------------|--------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|---------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| Year         | No.    | Prop. | No.       | Prop. | No.       | Prop. | No.     | Prop. | No.    | Prop. | No.   | Prop. |
| 1770s, 1780s | 445    | 35%   | 200       | 16%   | 580       | 46%   | 8       | 1%    | 24     | 2%    | 1257  | 100%  |
| 1893         | 1990   | 50%   | 1066      | 27%   | 89        | 2%    | 120     | 3%    | 699    | 18%   | 3964  | 100%  |

(Source for 1770s, 1780s Kára : 39; for 1893 Horváthová : 138-141).

Thus the first impact of capitalism on feudal Hungary did not have the immediate effect of integrating Gypsies further into the mainstream of production but instead pushed them back to its fringes. In this sense it is highly misleading to see the Gypsy artisans and musicians of late nineteenth century Slovakia as constituting a static, 'traditionally Gypsy' economy; they are more truly the Gypsy equivalent of the landless labourers of the overflowing nineteenth century towns who, until they were eventually absorbed by developing industry, eked out a precarious living in a variety of ways.\*

In spite of economic hardship, the Gypsy population grew steadily during the nineteenth century and clusters of huts became larger settlements, mainly as a consequence of natural increase although sporadic settling of nomads evidently continued where local conditions permitted. An 1857 census revealed more than a quarter of a million Gypsies in all the Hungarian lands and soon after the 1880s' measures in the Austrian

---

\* Viz. Thompson : 292 and Smout : 371 for conditions in early nineteenth century London and Glasgow respectively.

lands an 1893 census recorded around 36,000 Gypsies in Slovakia, three times the estimated 10,000 to 12,000 of a century before. Of the 1893 total 2,000 Gypsies were recorded as semi-nomadic - that is they wandered during the summer months but returned each year to a fixed winter base : a camp or perhaps a hut - and only 600 (less than 2 per cent) as nomadic. Even though a certain number of nomads must have escaped the census, it is clear that by this time the vast majority of Gypsies in Slovakia were already settled.

As well as the occupational swing to artisan work already discussed, the census also showed the great range and extent of these trades - metal workers such as smiths, locksmiths, cauldron-, and bell-makers; wood workers such as trough-, spoon-, and basket-makers; and a whole variety of other crafts : shoemakers, ropemakers, potters, brick-makers, lime-kiln workers and masons. However there were remarkably few dealers, pedlars and the like - less than 500 in the whole country. There was a similar figure for male unemployed, unbelievably low for this period of acute depression, but this statistic undoubtedly concealed the fact that perhaps the majority of those recorded as self-employed artisans were able to work only sporadically.

Excluding housewives, the number of Gypsy women unemployed was six times that for men. For those women who worked, the commonest occupations were washerwoman, domestic help, servant and casual agricultural labourer. Many women were listed as beggars, considerably less as fortune-tellers and a few as prostitutes (22). A low figure was given for thieves (127, of which 85 were women) and even lower for vagrants (38, of which 26 were women).

The figures for the Spis region showed a total of 2,792 Gypsies of whom only 38 were nomadic. As in the census for this region over a

century previously, the overwhelming majority of men worked as smiths (660), a significant minority as musicians (98), while very few worked in the fields (11) or as pedlars (8). A considerable number of women worked as servants or domestic helps (275), while almost as many made a living by begging (244). (Horváthová : 137-141).

The glut in labour power was ended by the First World War and as in the Austrian half of the Empire, attempts were made to conscript Gypsies in the Hungarian lands. In addition a 1916 Home Office regulation empowered local authorities to settle nomads and to use nomadic Gypsies for forced labour if they were unable to demonstrate a legitimate livelihood. Remaining nomads were to be issued with an identity card, without which they were not to be employed. They could only work in the district where their card had been issued and could only leave this district with police permission. For infringing these regulations offenders could be imprisoned for 15 days or be sent to a forced labour camp.

However, nomadic Gypsies were also entitled to some support from the village where they had been settled if they were unable to work. This was to be given in the form of food and clothing not in money. Whether many Gypsies received such support is doubtful, especially in eastern Slovakia where half of them lived, for this area was ravaged by front-line fighting. (Horváthová : 141-148).

#### The First Czechoslovakian Republic and the Second World War.

The military collapse of the Hapsburg Empire led to its political dismemberment in 1918 into a number of smaller states including Czechoslovakia, which politically united the Czech and Slovak peoples



for the first time in a thousand years. However the emergence of this new republic also created a situation that was unique in Europe as regards Gypsy development, for it combined within a single state the industrialised Czech lands with their insignificant population of nomadic Gypsies and, more importantly, a western tradition of anti-Gypsy legislation to match and rural Slovakia with its large settled Gypsy population whose development had been entirely eastern in pattern. Yet the resulting ferment from the mixture of these two ingredients was initially inhibited by political and economic factors and was not to be released for a full quarter-century, until the eventual declaration of the Second Republic in 1945.

In the first years of the Republic the situation of the Gypsies was desperate after years of wartime privation and in 1921 the Slovak Peasants' Union complained that "since they have nothing, the Gypsies either beg or steal and as poverty cases they are a burden on the peasantry". (quoted Horváthová : 154).

Conditions varied locally as did local authorities' treatment of Gypsies. Whilst some Slovakian regions (like Spiš<sup>v</sup>) reported that the majority of Gypsies worked in the fields, woods and building sites and caused no major problems, others (like Oravská<sup>á</sup>) adopted firmer measures imposing compulsory labour and a 7 p.m. curfew, after which Gypsies were not permitted to be on the streets or in public places.

In 1921 the Gypsies were recognised as a separate nationality but this gesture evidently did not mark any change in official approach towards them for in the same year the government circulated the 1888 regulations with the suggestions that these could be the basis for new legislation to control Gypsies. Copies were passed to all regional

governors in Slovakia with the proviso that they must bear in mind the different conditions in the Czech lands with only nomadic Gypsies, whereas the majority were settled in Slovakia. In reply almost all Slovakian regions demanded that remaining nomads should be forced to settle. Eventually a detailed register of all Gypsies was compiled throughout the Republic in 1924 and the following year fingerprints were collected in the Czech lands and Slovakia was asked to follow suit.

The register showed the extent to which the incorporation of Slovakia within an industrial capitalist state had eroded the artisan trades of settled Gypsies within a few years by the competition of cheap factory-made goods. Like some of the nomadic Gypsies of western Europe who were suffering the same fate, many Slovakian Gypsies turned to seasonal agricultural work and building work where it was available. The case of Spis<sup>✓</sup>, where smiths had predominated in both the late eighteenth and late nineteenth century censuses, has already been mentioned and this trend is confirmed by a more detailed comparison of data from 1893 and 1924 for the Michalovce district of eastern Slovakia where 40 per cent of the country's Gypsy adobe brick-makers and potters had been located.

Changed Means of Subsistence of Male Gypsies in Michalovce district\*

of Slovakia. (1893 - 1924)

(Source for 1893 Horváthová: 138-141; for 1924 Kára: 42, Horváthová: 156)

| Year | Adobe brick-makers, potters | Smiths | Musicians | Labourers | Others | Total |
|------|-----------------------------|--------|-----------|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1893 | 39%                         | 18%    | 18%       | 2%        | 23%    | 100%  |
| 1924 | 15%                         | 5%     | 20%       | 60%       | 0%     | 100%  |

\* The areas compared are not exactly the same for the 1893 figures are for the larger Zemplínská region (župa) which included the territory of the later Michalovce district (okres).

However, work opportunities were widening for a small minority of Gypsies, as isolated entries indicated - locksmiths, shop assistant, midwife, medical student, seamstress, shoemaker and barber. (Horváthová : 157).

The report also revealed the crushing poverty of many Gypsies, as in a comment of the Vranov district of east Slovakia.

The penalty of imprisonment has no effect on them, because imprisonment only improves their living conditions. It often happens that a Gypsy without resources commits a crime only to escape the pangs of hunger,

(Horváthová : 155, 156)

Yet because of the slow recovery of the economy in backward Slovakia, the situation of many peasants was only marginally better and increasing numbers of them were forced to become itinerant pedlars and craftsmen in order to survive, often working for food instead of cash or sometimes simply bartering fruit for grain. These impoverished peasants, added to the throng of nomadic and settled Gypsies already making a bare livelihood in this way, provoked a strong reaction from established shopkeepers and craftsmen who agitated through their influential trade associations for the elimination, or at least the regulation, of these virtually untaxed competitors.

The lobby was successful and in 1927 the Minister of Trade suggested to his Slovak equivalent that the forthcoming law to limit Gypsy nomadism was a good opportunity to regulate all such itinerants. The suggestion was enthusiastically received by local authorities, many of whom proposed that itinerants should be forbidden entry to towns and villages where the same services were already provided by local people. Similarly trade associations declared their support for "measures which could be used unambiguously to limit the competition of itinerant traders and



craftsmen without regard to their ethnicity or nationality".

(Horváthová : 158-160).

Law 117, passed in 1927, was therefore broadened in scope and in the first paragraph "gypsy" was defined for legal purposes as a way of life, notwithstanding the contradiction that it was recognised as a nationality in the 1921 and 1931 national censuses. As anticipated, this law closely followed the 1888 regulations and made continued nomadism dependent on police and local authority permission, which could be withdrawn at any time. Another register was prepared and nomads' passes were issued which specified permitted routes for each family.

Apparently 36,696 such passes were issued in the period until the Second World War (Šmerglová : 65),\* although it is unknown what proportion of these were for Gypsies. Since a 1927 census\*\* of Gypsies in Slovakia recorded 60,315 as settled and only 1,877 as nomadic (i.e. 3 per cent of the total) and a 1940 census gave 6,500 (Šmerglová : 80) as the entire Gypsy population of the Czech lands, it is evident that the number of registered nomads must have included many settled Gypsies or non-Gypsies or, most likely, both.

Some newspapers justified the 1927 law as a new and humane approach to the 'Gypsy problem'; it was nothing of the sort. In reality it was a characteristic example of the modern policy of harassment, being in essence little more than an unimaginative re-iteration of the measures of forty years earlier, somewhat modified along the lines of subsequent laws in France and Germany.

---

\* Davidová gives 36,000 as the number initially issued and 60,000 as the total for the First Republic, but this appears too high. (Davidová : 65).

\*\* Kára mistakenly gives the date of this census as 1924. (Kára : 43)

The legislation struck at the livelihood of itinerants without offering in its place any alternative employment or accommodation and it completely ignored the plight of the vast mass of settled Gypsies. As had happened in the depression at the end of the nineteenth century, these Gypsies found themselves legally and economically trapped in their primitive, segregated settlements in Slovakia.\* Once again demand dropped for their unskilled labour and with unemployment in the Republic rising to nearly a million in 1933, the chances of Gypsies finding new jobs were remote. Even the late nineteenth century 'solution' of artisan work was not a practical alternative because so many of these trades had been technologically superceded by the spread of mass-produced goods. Meanwhile the Gypsies' numbers were steadily increasing and had nearly doubled in Slovakia since 1893.

As had happened so often before in their history in times of post-war disruption or economic depression, the Gypsies' relations with surrounding communities deteriorated sharply when they, as the section of society with least, were forced to steal the crops of the scarcely more fortunate farmers and peasants in order to survive. In such a tense situation minor incidents could easily escalate to the level of bloodshed as in the 1928 Pobedim pogrom where, in reprisal for thefts of crops from the fields, Slovak villagers made an armed night attack on the Gypsy settlement, razing the huts to the ground, wounding eighteen and killing six Gypsies - including two young children. The strength of local feeling was such that it was not until the following afternoon

---

\* Some Gypsies joined the wave of Slovak emigrants to the U.S.A. but changed U.S. immigration policy made this much harder than before the First World War.

that the police were able to requisition, forcibly, the necessary transport to carry the seriously injured to hospital. The funeral was attended by five hundred Gypsies from nearby settlements but not a single Slovak villager was present except the officiating priest.

The national daily newspaper 'Slovák'\* assessed the massacre in the following way:

The Pobedim case can be characterised as a citizens' revolt against Gypsy life. In this there are the roots of democracy . . .

The Gypsy element, such as it is today, is really an ulcer on the body of our social life which must be cured in a radical way. The fact is that in the Pobedim case the Gypsies were provocative which lessens the guilt of the Pobedim farmers.

(Nováček : 25, 26).

The court evidently shared the view of 'Slovák', sentencing those found guilty of murder to sixteen months imprisonment and a derisory fine.

A year later a Gypsy robber band was accused of murder and cannibalism in the regional capital of eastern Slovakia. The second charge was eventually dropped but not before the press had inflamed public opinion with sensational and inaccurate coverage reminiscent of its role at a 1782 trial where forty Gypsies were tortured and executed having been found guilty of identical crimes, before an investigation ordered by Joseph II discovered that all of the supposed victims were still alive. In the case of the 1929 Košice 'Monster Trial', as it was popularly known, the publicity about cannibalism convinced

---

\* The mouthpiece of the fascist People's Party, the largest single party in Slovakia.



even erudite Gypsiologists who coin apologetics for it to this day.\*

Šmerglová argued questionably that the whole trial and press coverage "were intentionally prepared and exploited by the ruling coalition of the gentry. The main aim was to arouse the public against all our Gypsies and prepare a suitable climate for the . . . 1927 law". (Šmerglová : 72). Her allegation was unsubstantiated but while there is no concrete evidence to suggest that the hostility against Gypsies was deliberately fomented by the government, nevertheless there appeared little official resistance to such developments and perhaps even some elements within the government welcomed them to divert some of the acute public bitterness over social and economic conditions. From 1926 the dominant party in the coalition was the Agrarian Party which eventually took office in 1932. Since this party represented the interests of predominantly landowners, farmers, and peasants, it was unlikely to have had much sympathy to spare for Gypsies.

Some of the contemporary proposals for dealing with Gypsies looked back with unashamed longing at the uninhibited solutions possible in earlier centuries. A 1930 publication by a police officer, entitled 'Criminals by Profession. A Practical Handbook for Police Use', was chillingly explicit:

---

\* Serboianu accepted that cannibalism occurred in the 1929 case, as did Clébert who pleaded in mitigation "that it was a matter of 'Netotsi', pillaging and degenerate Gypsies, who are descendants of members of the first Transylvanian 'resistance movement' (who lived like wild beasts...)". (Clébert : 103). He was apparently misled into attributing a 'Netotsi' origin to Sandor Filek's band because their home village in East Slovakia (Moldava) bore the same name as the Rumanian province.

It appears that this fact . . . [i.e. the Gypsies' love of their children] could serve as a guide on how to proceed against the Gypsy menace. The sentence is exceptionally cruel, however the troublesome burden to the public of the Gypsy evil is still crueller. . . . Let them die out! Proclaim that as soon as a Gypsy appears on the Republic's territory not only will his children be taken away, but the procreation of further children will be made impossible. In this way the Republic will become even more feared by Gypsies than when a gibbet stood at every cross-roads.

(quoted Nováček : 87).

Ethnic relations continued to deteriorate and in the 1930s Gypsies were eventually forbidden entry to the larger towns, especially those with spa and tourist traffic (Horváthová : 167), but more sinister developments than occasional outbursts of anti-Gypsy sentiment were to emerge from the deepening crisis.

In Slovakia, worse living conditions than in the Czech lands, aggravated by the crisis and disastrous harvest failure of 1932, found some parts of the region on the verge of famine, a situation exploited by the fascist Hlinka [People's] Party to launch an anti-Czech and separationist campaign successfully.

(Straka : 82)

From the 1920s onwards this party captured between 25 and 40 per cent of the total Slovakian vote making it the largest single party in Slovakia and, unlike the Agrarians, an integral part of the party's stock-in-trade was the overt and calculated incitement to hatred of Jews and Gypsies. (Seton Watson : 335). The movement's spiritual antecedent, lay in the warped Slovak nationalism of the late nineteenth century when, deprived of a secular middle-class by Magyar domination of all Hungarian government-appointed jobs, the Slovaks found their few spokesmen in Roman Catholic priests who made anti-Semitism the chief plank in their nationalism. (Taylor : 202). Nor was the situation

fundamentally altered with the formation of the Czechoslovakian Republic in 1918 for, to a large measure, Czechs took the place of Hungarians and the most backward, eastern parts of the new state, Slovakia and Ruthenia (now part of the USSR), were left undeveloped and "were regarded more or less like colonies". (Nováček : 22).

The link between economic depression and the rise of fascism and associated manipulation of minorities as scapegoats is commonplace. As might have been expected therefore, pogroms against Gypsies were not limited to Czechoslovakia during this period but occurred also in Austria, France and Germany. (Nováček : 87).

Despite the generally bleak outlook it would be wrong to see the Gypsies' situation as entirely hopeless during the period of the Republic for remarkable, if isolated, efforts were made to integrate them, especially in the field of education.

In 1926 the first school especially for Gypsies was established in Užhorod, the capital of Ruthenia, with the motto: 'The Gypsy is also human'.

The idea of founding a Gypsy school first arose in 1923 when . . . a former teacher, put forward a bill before the local Council for establishing a Gypsy school out of local funds. The bill was rejected, however, owing to the opposition of Jewish and Hungarian members. In 1925 . . . a school inspector took up this idea again, in co-operation with . . . a government representative, and when the Gypsies promised they would carry out the work and furnish the materials, the bill was carried. And so the school was built, and was opened in November 1926.

('Lidové Noviny' 27.1.33)

Soon afterwards similar schools were established in several east Slovakian towns including Košice and Levoča (the capital of the Spiš



region). Meanwhile a number of Gypsy children attended ordinary schools although they rarely reached the higher grades.

In 1929 a group of Kosice doctors founded what was later known as the 'Society for the Study and Solution of the Gypsy Problem'. As well as concerning itself with health matters, the Society organised theatrical and musical performances by Gypsies in the principal theatres of Kosice and Uzhorod and inspired the formation of a flourishing Gypsy football club, 'Roma', which toured abroad. In 1933 the Society also began to publish books and articles, including contributions by the Republic's most eminent Gypsiologists, Štampach and Lesný. These were often highly critical of the 1927 law and racist tendencies in Czechoslovak newspapers. (Davidová : 26). Štampach however, for all his compassion for the Gypsies' situation, saw in them a potential political threat, writing: "From the political aspect Gypsies are certainly an element closest to the Communists". This view was not based on fantasy for some settled Gypsies had already joined the Communist Party, no doubt influenced by the Party's opposition to the 1927 law as well as by the condemnation in its press of mounting anti-Gypsy racism. (Nováček : 26, 27).

In spite of their courageous efforts during the 1930s to widen the Gypsies' educational and cultural opportunities and to strengthen their positive identity, localised and voluntary action groups could not hope to make any real impact on the vast underlying problem of thousands of seriously underemployed Gypsy families, living for the most part in segregated, insanitary shanty towns in the depths of rural Slovakia.

A determined national campaign backed by government funds would have been necessary but given the political slant of the ruling party and

the continuing recession, this was never a remote possibility. As it turned out subsequent events would have reversed any progress that had been made.

The occasional pogroms of the 1930s were soon revealed to be only a precursor of the sustained terror of the Second World War when the Nazis placed Gypsies high on their list of racial and national minorities to be eliminated. Their intention to purge Europe of Gypsies by progressive stages is evident from the spreading annihilation. First to perish were the Gypsies in Germany where their fate had already been prepared in the years before the War. Then came Gypsies in territories occupied by the German army and finally those in friendly states.

In fact Himmler had made preparations for the exemption of two Gypsy sub-ethnic groupings: the 'Sinti', descendants of the first group to arrive in Germany and regarded as 'racially pure', and the 'Lalleri', which although not 'pure', came "from German-speaking parts of Bohemia and Moravia in earlier centuries. Most of them belonged to a tribe which was living in the Sudetenland when it was annexed to Germany [from Czechoslovakia in 1938]". ((Ritter 1942) quoted Kenrick and Puxon : 89). Later the view of Bormann and Goebbels prevailed that all Gypsies should be exterminated without distinction.

The development of the War did not permit the Nazis to complete their programme, nevertheless a quarter of a million Gypsies perished at their hands. Most Gypsies in the Czech lands, a German protectorate from 1939, shared the fate of the German Gypsies and almost vanished as a distinct group in the gas chambers of the concentration camps.

In the Protectorate nomadism was banned in 1940 and two years later a law was enacted on January 1st, 1942 which stated:

In order to protect the community from all harmful persons, protective custody is herewith introduced... for anyone who, without being a professional or habitual criminal, endangers the public through his asocial behaviour, beggars, vagabonds, Gypsies and persons travelling as Gypsies.

(Kenrick and Puxon : 131, 132).

'Protective custody' for Gypsies meant two labour camps specially for Gypsies at Lety (S. Bohemia) and Hodonín (S. Moravia). The camps were only open for eighteen months and a year respectively, during which time 2,400 Gypsies passed through, 459 dying in the process. After the closure of these camps Gypsies were sent direct to concentration camps in Germany, especially Auschwitz and Birkenau, where there was a special Gypsy block, BIIe. (Nováček : 28; Kenrick and Puxon : 132-3).

A 1939 police report had estimated the Gypsy population of the Czech lands at around 13,000 (Kenrick and Puxon : 135) but a register in 1941 showed only 6,540, suggesting that at least some Gypsies had escaped to Slovakia while others were concealed by sympathetic non-Gypsies. Of these registered Gypsies, 6,490 were sent to concentration camps where most were gassed in 1944; only about 500 returned alive. (Šmerglová : 80).

The far more numerous Gypsies of Slovakia were fortunate in comparison in the autonomous puppet state that had been established in 1939 under the clerico-fascist Hlinka Party regime. Rather than plan their extinction, the first reaction of the new government was to extract forced labour from them. And so the initial treatment of Gypsies in wartime Czechoslovakia resembled a grotesque parody of the 'western' and 'eastern' approaches - with the important difference that for the first time in history advocates of the former had at their disposal efficient means of mass destruction.



Legislation in 1940 imposed compulsory labour duty of four months annually on Jews and Gypsies, although "by Gypsy is understood . . . only that member of the Gypsy race, both of whose parents are Gypsies and who, whether nomadic or settled, avoids work". Enforcement of the law varied greatly in different areas, for example in the Spiš region no Gypsies were sent to the labour camps from the town of Smižany while in nearby Letanovce "the mayor tried to protect the Gypsies but the Hlinka Guards (Slovak fascist police) ordered him to send Gypsies to the forced labour camps. However he selected only two". (Kenrick and Puxon : 136). Elsewhere Gypsies were sent to work camps to build the Prešov-Vranov railway line and to other camps including Dubnica, Hanušovce and Čemerne, most of which were in east Slovakia. (Davidová: 29).

The following year Gypsies were ordered to move their huts further away from towns and villages and where they already lived in houses amongst non-Gypsies, they were forced to abandon their homes and build new isolated settlements. They were permitted to visit towns only on specified days at fixed times and were to be completely excluded from cinemas, restaurants, parks and public transport. As with labour camps, compliance with these regulations was uneven and in 1944 "the Ministry of Internal Affairs wrote to district offices pointing out that they had not all complied with the 1941 law concerning the evacuation of Gypsies from towns and villages. All Gypsies had to be shifted to places well away from the roads and execution was to be the punishment for any refusing to move. The order ended with the ominous words:

'I wish to add that arrangements for concentration working camps for Gypsies are being prepared.'

(Kenrick and Puxon : 137)

At intervals there were the inevitable bloody pogroms where Gypsies died at the hands of Hlinka guards. At Ilija (central Slovakia) the entire Gypsy settlement of 112 men, women and children were slaughtered and at Slatina, Čierný Balog, Krupina, Kríž nad Hronom and elsewhere, Gypsies were burned alive in their huts and machine-gunned when they burst out with their clothes aflame. (Nováček : 29, Horváthová : 171, Davidová : 30, Kenrick and Puxon : 137).

Fleeing from this inhuman treatment many Gypsies joined the partisans in the mountains, sometimes attaining officer status, while Gypsy settlements frequently gave shelter to partisans and suffered the consequent harsh retributions. In Tisovec (central Slovakia) in 1944 a French partisan was shot, together with fourteen Gypsies who had tried to protect him. (Nováček : 89). Gypsies also played a part in the Slovak National Uprising in the summer of 1944 and were later decorated for their heroism.

It is impossible to give an accurate estimate of the number of Gypsies who were killed in Slovakia during the War but probably it was in the scale of hundreds rather than thousands.\* At any rate there had been no mass extermination; the War had ended too soon for that.

Following the liberation of the eastern part of the old Republic by the Soviet Red Army, a new government proclaimed the Košice Government Programme in April 1945, which included among its main points a declaration

---

\* Nováček gives the fantastic figure of 25,000 for Gypsy deaths in Slovakian work camps but gives no source. No other writer suggests there were large-scale deaths in these camps. (Nováček : 29).

on the illegality of ethnic discrimination. For the Gypsies this was to be a landmark and the promise of a better future with, for the first time in their history, the opportunity of actual not just formal equality with other citizens.



Note:Citizenship and Ethnicity in Austro-Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

Considerable confusion can arise from the ethnic diversity of the peoples inhabiting the pre-1918 states of Austria and Hungary, which together comprised the bulk of the Hapsburg Empire, and the post-1918 successor states also. To minimise ambiguity I have tried to distinguish throughout this and the following chapters between the inhabitants' citizenship and ethnicity by the use of different terms in the following way -

Pre-1918.

| <u>STATE</u>                            | <u>CITIZENSHIP</u> | <u>ETHNICITY</u> |
|---|--------------------|------------------|
| (greater) <u>Austria</u>                | Austrian           | various          |
| until 1918 including:                   |                    |                  |
| - (modern) Austria                      | "                  | mainly German    |
| - the Czech lands (Bohemia and Moravia) | "                  | mainly Czech     |
| etc.                                    |                    |                  |
| (greater) <u>Hungary</u>                | Hungarian          | various          |
| until 1918 including:                   |                    |                  |
| - (modern) Hungary                      | "                  | mainly Magyar    |
| - Slovakia (known as Upper Hungary)     | "                  | mainly Slovak    |
| etc.                                    |                    |                  |

Post-1918

|                                  |                 |                            |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| <u>Czechoslovakia</u>            | Czechoslovakian | various                    |
| including:                       |                 |                            |
| - the Czech lands                | "               | mainly Czech               |
| - Slovakia                       | "               | mainly Slovak *            |
| - Ruthenia (between 1918 & 1938) | "               | mainly Ruthene (Ukrainian) |

\* The adjective 'Slovakian' is occasionally used to distinguish inhabitants of Slovakia as opposed to those of Slovak ethnicity; unfortunately there exists no convenient equivalent for inhabitants of the Czech lands.

MAIN SOURCES AND REFERENCES FOR CHAPTER TWO.a) Gypsies in Czechoslovakia.

- E. Davidová - 'Bezkolíb a šiatrov'. Kosice. 1965.
- E. Horváthová - 'Cigáni na Slovensku'. Slovenská akademie vied. Bratislava. 1964.  
(For scholarship, detail and analysis Horváthová's study is outstanding. The basic work on Czechoslovakian Gypsy history).
- K. Kára et al. - 'Ke spoločenské problematike Cikánů v ČSSR'. Ústav pro filosofii a sociologii ČSAV. Prague. 1975.  
(Report of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences' research team. (1969-1975)).
- K.H. Mácha - 'Dílo K.H. Máchy'. Plejada. Prague. 1929.
- J. Nováček - 'Cikáni včera, dnes a zítra'. Socialistická akademie. Prague, 1968.
- V. Predmerský - 'Rastú nám noví ľudia'. Slovenské pedagogické nakl. Bratislava, 1961.
- J.H. Schwicker - 'Die Zigeuner in Ungarn und Siebenburgen'. Vienna and Teschen. 1883.
- J. Suchý - 'Die Zigeuner' in 'Rassengeschichte der Menschheit'. Oldenbourg. Munich and Vienna. 1968.
- Z. Jamnická-Šmerglová - 'Dějiny našich cikánů'. Orbis. Prague, 1955.
- F. Štampach - 'Cikáni v československé republice'. Prague, 1929.

b) Gypsies in Europe.

- T. Acton - 'Gypsy Politics and Social Change'. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1974.
- M. Block - 'Zigeuner, ihr Leben und ihr Seele'. Leipzig, 1936.
- A. Clarke - 'The Sero-anthropology of Human Population Groups, with Special Reference to Gypsies'. Proceedings of N.G.E.C., Oxford, 1971.
- J.P. Clébert - 'The Gypsies'. Penguin. Harmondsworth, 1967.  
(This source is the best-known general history of the Gypsies available in English. Despite repudiating the romanticised view of Gypsies, Clébert falls into this trap himself. For this reason, as well as for the valuable historical information it contains, I have quoted this book extensively).

- H. Fullerton - 'The Health and Welfare of Travelling Families'.  
Royal Sanitary Association of Scotland. Inverness, 1969.
- H. Gentleman and S. Swift - 'Scotland's Travelling People'. HMSO.  
Edinburgh, 1971.
- I.F. Grant - 'Highland Folk Ways'. Routledge and Kegan Paul,  
London, 1974.
- D. Kenrick and G. Puxon - 'The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies'. Heinemann,  
London, 1972.
- H. Mode and S. Wölffling - 'Zigeuner'. Koehler und Amelang. Leipzig, 1968.
- P.N. Panaitescu - 'The Gypsies in Walachia and Moldavia : A Chapter  
of Economic History'. Journal of the Gypsy Lore  
Society. Vol.20 (Pt. 2), 1941.
- G. Puxon - 'Rom : Europe's Gypsies'. Minority Rights Group,  
London, 1973.
- W. Simson - 'History of the Gypsies'. New Stat. Acct. Kirk  
Yetholm. 1847.
- Tinkers in Scotland - 'Report of the Departmental Committee on Tinkers  
in Scotland'. HMSO, Edinburgh, 1918.

c) General History.

- P. Anderson - 'Lineages of the Absolutist State'. New Left Books,  
London, 1974.
- Atlas - 'Školní atlas československých dějin'. Ústřední  
správa geodézie a kartografie. Prague, 1965.
- E.J. Hobsbawm - 'Bandits'. Penguin. Harmondsworth, 1972.
- V. Husa - 'Dějiny československa'. Orbis, Prague, 1962.
- ed. J. Macek - 'Československá vlastivěda díl II - Dějiny svazek I'.  
Orbis, Prague, 1963.
- Z. Salzmann and V. Scheufler - 'Komárov - A Czech Farming Village'.  
Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., London 1974.
- R.W. Seton Watson - 'A History of the Czechs and Slovaks'. Hutchinson,  
London, 1943.
- T.C. Smout - 'A History of the Scottish People'. Fontana, London, 1972.
- ed. V. Straka - 'Czechoslovakia Today'. Artia, Prague, 1964.
- A.J.P. Taylor - 'The Habsburg Monarchy'. Penguin. Harmondsworth, 1964.
- E.P. Thompson - 'The Making of the English Working Class'. Penguin,  
1968.
- S.H. Thomson - 'Czechoslovakia in European History'. Cass. London, 1965.



CHAPTER THREETHE 'GYPSY QUESTION'.Page

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Post-War Migration in Czechoslovakia and Contemporary Developments Elsewhere in Europe ... .. | 104 |
| The Problematic Level of Post-War Gypsy Immigration to Czechoslovakia ... ..                  | 111 |
| The Emergence of the 'Gypsy Question' in Czechoslovakia...                                    | 117 |
| The 1958 Central Committee Decree ... ..  | 131 |
| - Some Problems of Documentation ... ..   | 131 |
| - The Nature of the 'Gypsy Question' ... ..   | 133 |
| - Origins and Persistence ... ..  | 133 |
| - Alternative Approaches and their Dangers ... ..   | 136 |
| - The rationale ... ..  | 146 |
| Ethnic Tensions in Post-War Czechoslovakia ... ..   | 155 |

CHAPTER THREE.THE 'GYPSY QUESTION'.Post-War Migration in Czechoslovakia and Contemporary Developments Elsewhere in Europe.

If the formation of the First Republic in 1918 had created a unique potential by juxtaposing 'eastern' Gypsies and 'western' industrialisation, it was the establishment of the Second Republic in 1945 that released the legal and economic constraints which had stifled any new development between the Wars.

Politically the crucial factor was the post-War dominance of the Communist Party. As leaders of the resistance movement during the Nazi occupation, the Communists played a major part in framing the national coalition government plans (the 1945 Košice Government Programme) which included nationalisation of all natural wealth, sources of power, large industries, banks and insurance companies as well as the expulsion of most of the Sudeten Germans and the expropriation of their property. Among the full democratic rights proclaimed in this Programme was a pledge to prohibit ethnic discrimination which automatically cancelled the 1927 legislation that had effectively restricted Gypsy movement and employment. (Straka : 92, 93).

The Communists' leading position was confirmed in the 1946 election from which they emerged as the largest single party with 38 percent of the overall vote and this victory enabled them to form a majority government together with the Social Democrats. Their popularity stemmed from their previous rejection of the Munich agreement, their organised wartime resistance to the Nazis, their positive programme for post-War

reconstruction and also from their link with the Soviet Union which had liberated most of the country. On the other hand the previously dominant bourgeois parties were popularly associated with pre-War unemployment, the disastrous reliance on western allies which had culminated in helpless acquiescence to the Munich decision to dismember the Republic and the lack of any political philosophy other than the restoration of the status quo.

However the economic effects of this shift in the political centre of gravity were probably overriding in the case of the Gypsies. At the end of the nineteenth century and between the Wars the Slovak peasantry had been unencumbered by the kind of legislation that restricted Gypsy movement within the country\* and yet had been forced to emigrate rather than migrate internally to escape poverty, because of the current depressed level of Czech home industry. After the First World War it had taken until 1928 for the Republic's industrial production to regain the 1913 level - a full ten years - and soon afterwards industry was plunged into recession once more during the 1930s.

The contrast after the Second World War was striking. From the situation where "industrial production in September 1945 was only about half that of 1913 . . . the first Two-Year Plan (1947-1948) succeeded not only in restoring the economy (with changes), but in surpassing the 1937 level of industrial output, by around 10 percent". (Wheeler : 25).

---

\* However there were the "stringent emigration laws of 1903 and 1908. [but these] proved quite unavailing to check . . . the flow of emigrants, who were almost exclusively peasants . . . In 1907 [alone] 203,000 [emigrated] out of a total [Hungarian] population of 19,000,000". (Seton Watson : 280).



This remarkable recovery was achieved despite the death of almost 360,000 people in Nazi concentration camps and the loss of two and a half million Germans from the border regions of Bohemia and Moravia who either fled or were expelled and many of whom were productive workers.\* (Straka : 91).

The Communist programme included plans for the eventual industrialisation of Slovakia, which in 1937 had produced less than seven per cent of the Republic's total industrial production, but the equalisation of such a severe imbalance would obviously require years of correction while the immediate post-War need was to regenerate the existing mines and factories in the Czech lands to increase production of energy and steel as a base for further expansion.

The population loss, particularly severe in the heavy industrial border areas of north Moravia and north Bohemia, combined with continuing industrial expansion to produce a sustained demand for industrial workers and rural Czechs and Slovaks went in their thousands to the city of Ostrava and its satellites (N. Moravia) that produced three quarters of the Republic's black coal, iron and steel and to towns like Most (N. Bohemia) where three quarters of the country's brown coal deposits were located.

To these same destinations went the Gypsies in what can only be described as a mass migration. In the immediate post-War years thousands of Gypsies left their isolated settlements in rural Slovakia where they had been virtually imprisoned for centuries to seek work in the labour-

---

\* "In 1937 about 425,000 Germans were employed in industry alone. By December 1946 there were only 61,000". (quoted Wheeler : 27).

starved industrial areas of the Czech lands. For the first time in history Gypsies were entering the general labour market on a large scale, usually as unskilled factory and construction workers and also as miners.

Already by 1947 there were 16,752 Gypsies in the Czech lands of a total Gypsy population of 101,200\* (Šmerglová : 86). These comprised over 16 per cent, nearly double the pre-War proportion and, for an obvious tragic reason, they were almost all recent immigrants from Slovakia. By 1958, although no precise figures are available, the Gypsy population was estimated at between 120,000 and 150,000 of which perhaps a quarter were in the Czech lands.

It is possible to see this post-War migration of Slovakian Gypsies as a counterpart to the urbanisation of the largely nomadic western European Gypsies which had been continuing throughout the twentieth century but which accelerated significantly after the Second World War. Such a comparison is misleading and must be treated with extreme caution for the common causal factor in these parallel movements was not a shared Gypsy identity, understood in any racial or cultural sense, but rather a similar economic predicament. Moreover, although containing the same ingredient of a population shift to urban areas, the solutions were fundamentally different as might have been expected from the dissimilar development patterns in east and west. This is quite evident from closer examination of some of the more important examples of large-scale Gypsy population movement in twentieth century Europe.

---

\* These figures were given in a Criminal Headquarters report (9.7.48) and were possibly compiled using residence registration cards.

Gypsies in Czechoslovakia, as in western Europe generally, had seen their niche as artisans progressively destroyed by competition from the mass-produced goods of the advanced industrial economies in which they lived. However, while the house-dwelling Slovakian Gypsies had adopted the customary solution of rural landless labourers and had migrated to become part of the urban industrial proletariat, the western European nomads had moved towards the population centres without abandoning either their characteristic self-employed and family-based economy or their nomadism.

A much closer western European parallel to the post-war migration of Slovakian Gypsies is provided, not by the urbanisation of the indigenous nomads, but by the influx of many settled Gypsies who joined the flood of southern European migrant workers - from Yugoslavia, Spain and Turkey, where there had been a comparable eastern pattern of development. Like other 'guest workers' they inhabited shanty-towns ('bidonvilles') or barracks on the fringes of the industrial zones that employed them. (Puxon : 8).

However the nearest equivalent to Czechoslovakia's experience\* was that of Poland where - in spite of more vigorous extermination of Gypsies during the War, a higher proportion of nomads and a greater number of post-War Gypsy immigrants from the East - many Gypsies migrated internally to the coal and steel belt of Upper Silesia (Katowice and Nowa Huta) which lay only a few miles to the north-east of the Ostrava-Karvina coal basin, its Czechoslovakian counterpart. (Kaminski).

---

\* Elsewhere in eastern Europe the predominantly agricultural economy and relatively low level of heavy industrialisation precluded internal Gypsy migration (as in Czechoslovakia and Poland), while stringent restrictions on foreign travel to the West prevented migration to Germany and France (as from Yugoslavia).



In western Europe the effect of the growing urbanisation of indigenous Gypsies after the Second World War and in particular of the increased visibility of these nomads, due to their widespread adoption of motor lorries and trailer caravans, was to provoke official action. At first local authority attempts to dislodge them from larger urban concentrations went unresisted but as more intensive land use during the 1950s and 1960s made stopping-places progressively harder to find, the Gypsies began to hold their ground and the level of conflict escalated sharply when local authority evictions were countered by activist groups. After the brutality involved had been effectively publicised by the new medium of television there were moves, especially in Britain and France, to achieve the same aim of preventing Gypsy urbanisation by administrative means which would concede the presence of a limited number of Gypsies in urban areas in return for the power to exclude the remainder.

In England, for example, the 1959 Highways Act renewed the 1835 prohibition on Gypsies camping along the roadsides and in 1967 the Lord Chief Justice pronounced that in law 'gypsy' meant no more than "a person leading a nomadic life with no fixed employment and with no fixed abode". This ruling in terms of a way of life rather than an ethnic identity was fully compatible with the 'modern' approach of harassment to promote assimilation, outlined in the previous chapter, and had the consequence that Gypsy organisations were effectively prevented from fighting discrimination on the grounds that it infringed the 1965 Race Relations Act. (Fraser : 75-77).

After a number of violent confrontations in the industrial Midlands and North had heightened public concern, the 1968 Caravan Sites Act was introduced, requiring urban local authorities to provide camping facilities for a minimal fixed number of caravans while leaving their

rural counterparts with a relatively open-ended commitment. Once these conditions had been satisfied, councils were promised 'designated' status - i.e. they were to become no-go areas with the power to impose swingeing sanctions on any additional Gypsies that should venture onto their territory. Site provision was painfully slow and in spite of the fact that a 1965 census had recorded 3,400 families on the road in England and Wales,\* the number of sites "had just passed fifty in 1972, representing barely 20 per cent of the overall need". (Puxon : 10).

In France, however, the 1912 law remained in force until 1969 when a new law replaced the grotesque 'carnet anthropométrique' by a more streamlined 'carnet de circulation' and, at the same time, gave 'Préfets des Départements' the power to assign France's 80,000 nomadic Gypsies to specific local authorities. However such legal attachment did not imply any right to a place to live. As in the case of Scotland, attempts at persuasion by central government brought negligible results:

The French Government, like their counterparts in Italy and Spain, have at infrequent intervals issued circulars suggesting but which do not oblige district authorities to set up caravan sites. Less than a dozen have responded and existing camping grounds consist usually of wasteland next to rubbish tips lacking even a water supply.

(Puxon : 8).

As in western Europe it was post-war urbanisation of Gypsies that prompted official action in Czechoslovakia but although the pattern of movement from Slovakia villages to Czech cities was so unlike that of

---

\* The English Caravan Sites Act was not extended to Scotland because the Scottish Office preferred persuasion by circular rather than coercion by law in dealing with its local authorities. In consequence Scotland had one temporary local authority site for fifteen families in 1975 although a census in August 1969 had recorded 344 families on the road. (Gentleman : 19). Meanwhile the 1865 Trespass Act, which makes trespass in Scotland a criminal instead of a civil offence as in England, still remained the principal means of evicting nomadic caravan dwellers.



nomads in England and France, the Czechoslovakian authorities were unable to shake themselves free of their preconceived notion of Gypsies as inveterate nomads. This was a major reason why the Czechoslovakian policy of assimilation had features in common with contemporary policies in western Europe, even though it resembled far more closely the much earlier assimilation campaign of Maria Theresa.

The Problematic Level of Post-War Gypsy Immigration to Czechoslovakia.

Given the analysis of Gypsy population movement primarily as a response to economic development - though mediated by political conditions,

it would not be surprising if in addition to internal Gypsy migration from Slovakia to the Czech lands, there had also been considerable immigration of foreign Gypsies from other eastern European countries to Czechoslovakia in the immediate post-War years. Indeed, in the best-known study of Czechoslovakia's Gypsy policy to have been published in the West, Otto Ulč\* argued that such an influx occurred on a large scale and consequently that much of Czechoslovakia's present Gypsy population consists of post-War immigrants.

[The Gypsies'] number gained greatly through largely illegal immigration following the cessation of hostilities in 1945. Their brethren from the ravaged lands of Eastern Europe sought a domicile in relatively unscathed Czechoslovakia.

(Ulč : 423).

For all the prima facie plausibility of such a phenomenon the evidence must be treated with great caution.

---

\* O. Ulč in 'Soviet Studies', April 1969. A more recent study, drawn from this thesis, is included in Rehfish et al. (1974).



Ulc's main argument to support his claim is based on demographic data.

Whereas, according to the 1930 census there were only some 32,000 Gypsies in Czechoslovakia. . . the first postwar census of 1966 which included the Gypsies registered a sevenfold increase . . . [In spite of the high birth rate] the sevenfold increase of Gypsy population in 20 years [sic] seems a biological impossibility.

(ibid : 421,423).

Apart from the careless slip of mis-stating the time interval between the two censuses as 20 years instead of 36, Ulc's argument is flawed by the mistaken choice of the 1930 census total as a base from which to calculate Gypsy population increase for comparison with other totals for Gypsies immediately suggests that the 1930 figure was far too low to be remotely possible. The 1893 census had recorded around 36 thousand Gypsies in Slovakia alone (i.e. 4 thousand or 11 per cent more than Ulc's figure for 37 years later) and an almost contemporaneous 1927 census gave the Slovakian total as 62 thousand!

Ignoring the suspect 1930 figure for the moment, the Slovakian Gypsy population appears to have grown between 1893 and 1927 at an average annual rate of 2.1 per cent and continued to increase at the higher yet comparable rate of 2.8 per cent until 1947, when a total of 102 thousand was recorded.\* Over the next twenty years the average rate increased sharply to around 6 per cent, as modern medicine and an improved diet made their usual impact on infant mortality. This could be seen in the altered demographic structure for whilst in the 1947

---

\* Although this figure represented the Gypsy population of the whole Republic, the mass extermination of Czech Gypsies during the War meant that all but a few hundred were of Slovakian origin.

census 38 per cent of the Gypsy population was under fifteen years of age, by 1970 this proportion had risen to 51 per cent. (Kára : 50).

In the two decades between 1947 and 1967 the Gypsies' number more than doubled to 224 thousand but although this was a staggering rate of growth for a European country, it was not unusual in the Third World. Therefore it was by no means the 'biological impossibility' that Ulc<sup>v</sup> claimed, requiring the additional factor of immigration to explain it.

There still remains the problem of the 1930 figure : why was it so low?

Unlike the other totals listed above, which were derived from surveys limited to Gypsies, the 1930 figure was taken from a general census of the entire population of the Republic and, as such, simply recorded the number of Gypsies who had declared themselves 'of Gypsy nationality' to the census-taker. Although a poor guide to real Gypsy population levels the 1930 figure, taken in conjunction with the more reliable 1927 figure, did indicate the extent to which Gypsies had been intimidated into denying their origins by ominous contemporary events such as registration and fingerprinting, the 1927 law against nomadism, pogroms like that at Pobedim and the 1929 'Monster Trial' of Gypsies for cannibalism.

(A similar phenomenon occurred in the national census of 1970 which some Gypsies feared to be a disguised attempt to compile another 1958-style 'nomads' register'.\*)

---

\* This fear was expressed by many Gypsies during my field-work (1969-1972).

The preliminary results of the 1970 National Census showed an apparent loss of almost 25,000 Gypsies from the previous year['s special Gypsy census], but the Federal Statistical Office explained that 'not all Gypsies acknowledge their origin' . . .  
(Davidová and Guy : 83).)

Ulc attempted to back up his demographic argument with empirical evidence that Czechoslovakia's Gypsy population had been enlarged by the inclusion of Gypsies in the post-war population transfers.

Governments, traditionally unenthusiastic about their Gypsy population, also tried to dispose of the problem under the minorities exchange agreements. Thus, the Hungarian government managed to smuggle these people as 'Slovaks' in the transport trains. Prague, in turn, countered by mingling the unwelcome guests with the Sudeten Germans liable for expulsion from the country. Some of the transports with fictitious Teutons went through, some were returned. This back-and-forth involuntary nomadism also contributes to an explanation of the relatively large Gypsy population in today's Czech borderlands.

(Ulc : 423 footnote).

While it is probable that both sides included Gypsies in the transfers between Hungary and Slovakia, there is no evidence to suggest that this resulted in a net increase in the Gypsy population of Slovakia. However, there is no conceivable way in which the other major population transfer, that of Sudeten Germans to Germany, can 'contribute to an explanation of the relatively large Gypsy population in today's Czech borderlands'. In the Czech lands, as in Austria and Germany, the indigenous largely nomadic Gypsies had been almost wiped out and therefore any Gypsies in the Czech borderlands who might have been transported must have been post-War migrants from Slovakia.\* It seems unlikely that the Czech authorities could have hoped to pass off dark-

---

\* Even today there are a few German speaking Gypsies ('Sinti') in the Czech lands who survived the War but they amount to a handful only.



skinned, non-German speaking Gypsies as Sudetens but even if they had been successful, this would have resulted in a population loss from the borderlands and not a gain.

It might seem unnecessary to refute at such length the claim that a significant part of the post-War Gypsy population of Czechoslovakia consisted of recent immigrants, but it is important to realise the sinister purposes often served by this argument. Some Czech local authorities accused the incoming migrant Gypsies from Slovakia - ignorant of their rights and with their papers frequently incomplete or in disorder - of being illegal immigrants and consequently not entitled as Czechoslovakian citizens to full legal and welfare protection. While some excuse might be made for the Czechs, innundated by a completely different kind of Gypsy than they had known hitherto, no such justification can be made for their Slovakian counterparts who later reported to central government that their own local Gypsy settlements were of very recent origin.\*

On the whole these tactics were variants of the familiar device universally adopted by western European local authorities who refuse to make any provision for nomadic Gypsies on the grounds that they are unknown and recent newcomers, even if the Gypsies in question are able to prove long-established residence in the area.

---

\* See the following chapter for examples where local authorities in Slovakia:

"[listed Gypsy] settlements allegedly founded in the 1930s yet which local informants . . . remember as already long-established in the 1890s and which parish records show to be at least 150 years old". (Guy : 216).

To their credit the 1958 policy makers did not hint at any influx of foreign Gypsies but the unprecedented scale of internal migration, supported by the myth of Gypsy rootlessness, prompted a popular belief to this effect.

The best and most balanced summary of this whole question is that given in the authoritative 1975 study, 'Concerning the Problem-Area of Gypsies in Czechoslovakia' (Kára et al.), by an experienced research team at the Czechoslovakian Academy of Sciences.

[After the war some Czechoslovakian Gypsies returned from abroad] - from concentration camps, . . . from work camps, . . . or from the battlefield. . . . With them came a small number of foreign Gypsies - mainly from the Balkans - who usually claimed to be nomads from pre-war Czechoslovakia. (. . . The movement of Gypsy groups between our own and neighbouring countries during this period has not been researched; evidently, however, it did not involve a great number as is popularly believed.)

(Kára : 49).

THE EMERGENCE OF THE 'GYPSY QUESTION'IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

While the government grudgingly approved of the initial movement of Gypsies to the Czech lands it was uneasy about the duration and complexity of the migratory flow. Frequent official complaints about Gypsies 'fluctuating' showed little comprehension of the migrants' problems of adjustment or of their undoubtedly deep ambivalence about the changes for, whether in Slovakian village or Czech town, life could never be the same again for the Gypsies; the fact and continuing possibility of migration had revolutionised their perspectives.

It was also noted with apprehension that in spite of the post-War developments Gypsies still lived a largely separate life - in their original settlements or, in a few cases, in carts and tents along the roadsides or even in new urban homes. Moreover, whether this segregation was self-sought or imposed on them, the majority of Gypsies still lived in a noticably different way from their non-Gypsy fellow citizens.

In Slovakia many rural Gypsy settlements seemed to have barely changed in outward appearance from how they must have been in the 1930s, or even earlier. They ranged in size from hamlets of two or three huts to teeming shanty towns of several hundred and were usually physically separated from the nearest Slovak settlement, sometimes by only a few yards so that the Gypsy dwellings formed a quarter of the village proper, but more commonly by up to a mile. In such cases the settlement was often hidden away out of sight, set behind a wood or in a hollow, and a rough track impassable to motor vehicles was the only means of access to the outside world.



The huts themselves varied greatly since they were built of whatever local building material lay to hand. In the lowlands the walls were frequently of uneven, home-made adobe brick, while in upland forested regions primitive log-cabins were commoner. As in shanty-towns the world over, flattened oil-drums were a popular method of roofing. In a very few areas Gypsies still lived in 'zemljanky', semi-subterranean dwellings that were little more than large burrows hollowed from the hillside and blocked-off with a ramshackle wooden house-front.

Most of the huts were small yet two-roomed. If they had furniture at all the kitchen contained a large wood-burning stove for heating and cooking while the bedroom was almost filled by a large double-bed in which slept the parents and smaller children. Older children and occasionally a grandparent crammed into one or more single beds in the kitchen or else slept on the floor. The overcrowding was extreme and getting worse but it was relieved to some extent by the fact that people spent much of their spare time out of doors - gossiping, playing cards, singing, arguing.

The Gypsies' awareness of the insanitary conditions was dulled by familiarity - the inadequate earth closets that some did not bother to use, the lack of any refuse collection, the rats, the pools of stagnant water, the lack of electricity and the murky well polluted by surface drainage that was the only source of drinking water for the whole community. Likewise the consequent disease was accepted fatalistically - skin infections, trachoma, lice, T.B., dysentery and exceptionally cholera - as well as the high infant mortality rate and shorter life expectancy.

The physical separation of the Gypsy and non-Gypsy settlements had been and still was a measure of the social gulf between the two communities. In a few places Gypsies were accepted as fellow-villagers but more generally

a semi-apartheid system operated. Sometimes Gypsies were excluded from the village pub and where their children attended school they were often seated separately and did not mix spontaneously in play. In general, social intercourse between the two communities was minimal and was limited to work situations.

It was at work that the greatest changes had taken place, for Gypsy men were now employed on equal rates in the recently collectivised or nationalised agricultural enterprises, in the state-owned forests or in associated industries such as sawmills and paper mills. However their womenfolk could usually find work only as before, as seasonal harvesters or privately as domestics, cleaning the villagers' houses.

Signs of the Gypsies' new wealth were visible in new, fashionable clothes, the spread of radios that were left blaring all day at full volume in the settlement - hitherto they had made their own entertainment; songs, music, dances, riddles and fairy stories - but most spectacularly in the new, brick houses that were springing up even in the most isolated settlements.

These houses were mostly the work of returning migrants who had made their journey to the Czech lands for reasons of expediency - to earn the high wages of an industrial worker that were generally not available locally. But their savings were not all they brought back with them for they had new experiences of life in the city; of factory-work alongside non-Gypsies where the status of work-mate often took priority over ethnicity, of money in their pockets and of places to spend it - department stores, cinemas, dance-halls and cafes where the waiters were too busy to care whether the customer was Czech, Pole or Gypsy.

On their return home the settlement and the village seemed smaller and more confining than they had remembered and confronted by the Slovak villagers' continuing monopolisation of the few communal resources, they were unwilling to submit to their former subordinate position. Inter-ethnic arguments and fights broke out occasionally but did not escalate to the level of pogroms as they had done before the War, for now the law was not automatically loaded against the Gypsies.

For some, readjustment proved too difficult and after selling their new houses to a relative they set off for the Czech lands once more, adding their numbers to the constant stream of younger Gypsies migrating for the first time in search of the adventure of the wider world as well as independence from their ever-present parents and relatives. Other returned migrants would have gladly left again but were unable to find a buyer in the settlement for their newly-built houses or else stayed for family reasons - a sick parent or a jealous wife, fearful of the greater freedom of urban life. Yet many were simply glad to be home in the country again, far from the confused tumult of the strange, industrial city and now living in a fine brick house to be envied by relatives and neighbours.

The life of the Gypsy migrants in the Czech lands was not without its difficulties. Unlike the home areas they had left, there was well-paid work in plenty, and Gypsies were generally recruited as unskilled heavy labourers to dig trenches, clear building-sites, collect refuse, repair railway lines, reline blast-furnaces and mine coal. The women too could work in the urban equivalent of their former village role - as cleaners and street-sweepers. As the socialist state rewarded such male shock-workers with higher wage-rates the Gypsies were pleased that they



could save so quickly, but this did not make their jobs any less monotonous, dirty, exhausting or dangerous.

Czech employers viewed their new Gypsy workers with mixed feelings. They were glad to have labour for such arduous tasks, but also they complained that Gypsies were unreliable and undisciplined employees who turned up late, missed shifts, feigned sickness, changed jobs without good reason and, when on holiday, vanished without trace to Slovakia to reappear weeks or months later than required - or not at all.

As young Gypsies continued to follow their parents into unskilled jobs, attracted by the pay and lacking the educational qualifications for alternative employment, official anxiety was expressed that Gypsies might remain a caste of illiterate manual workers. Poor progress of Gypsy pupils in Czech schools only strengthened such fears and in spite of the children's imperfect knowledge of the teaching language their failure was often attributed to inadequate family support. Gypsy parents were accused of neglecting their children by failing to feed, clothe or supervise them properly; instead they were thought to spend their spare time in drinking, gambling and fighting, the supposed central ingredients of Gypsy social life or 'culture'.

Housing too was a major problem because complete families often migrated and not only the economically active. In the late 1940s the expulsion of the Germans and the construction, as part of the first Two-Year Plan, of 250,000 new homes to replace a similar number destroyed during the War had meant that for a time Gypsy migrants could generally be allocated local authority housing but thereafter the continuing expansion of heavy industrial capacity during the 1950s and the consequent diversion of resources from home to factory and office construction led

✓ same

to an increasingly severe housing shortage in the towns. The vacancies that did occur were naturally most frequent in the less desirable districts, and consequently Gypsies were usually allocated dingy tenement flats or dilapidated older buildings.

While growing pressure on urban housing stock was important in determining Gypsy settlement patterns, of even greater significance was official housing policy. In the coal and steel centre of Ostrava, for example, two completely new satellite towns were built to house the city's mushrooming population but although intended for incoming workers and their families, very few Gypsies came to live there because local authorities evidently felt such modern housing to be unsuitable for Gypsies straight from primitive settlements in Slovakia. Perhaps because of some unfortunate early experiences many local authorities soon:

practically ceased to house Gypsies in decent flats in acceptable residential districts. Instead, as a matter of standard practice, they began to allocate to all Gypsy arrivals flats that were either cramped, dirty and mouldering or else cold and cavernous, located in houses long destined for demolition and which stood in shattered, depopulated back-streets.

(Šmerglová : 89).

Some Gypsies actively sought local authority housing in poorer districts for its cheapness allowed them to save more and although amenities were sub-standard for Czech towns, even the bare provision of a cold-water tap and a shared flush-toilet was an improvement on the huts they had recently left. Those migrating to towns where kinsmen were already established wanted to live nearby and in some cases local authority flats were passed on within Gypsy families.

Later, when local authorities became unwilling to allocate any public housing to Gypsies, the same ugliness and lack of amenities made private flats in these same areas relatively cheap and consequently popular with Gypsy purchasers.

All of these factors tended to concentrate Gypsy migrants to the Czech lands most heavily in the decayed urban cores where, by the late 1950s, they formed what were evidently becoming minor ghettos. In these concentrations their distinctively dark skin and expressive behaviour made them highly visible. Like all country migrants to the city they made an attempt to re-create something of their former village life which, in the Gypsies' case, took the form of a continuous occupation of selected parks by Gypsy women who argued vociferously while their children and grandchildren played football over the flower-beds. The other inhabitants of Ostrava wryly nicknamed one central park 'Kešely plac' (Kešely Square) in an unenthusiastic tribute to one of the largest Gypsy families in the neighbourhood.

Meanwhile small bands of truly nomadic Gypsies, known as 'Olach' or 'Vlach' because they had originated in the Rumanian province of Wallachia, still travelled the Republic with horses, carts and tents making a variable livelihood as horse-dealers and fortune-tellers. This sub-ethnic minority regarded themselves as distinct and kept themselves separate from the far more numerous settled Gypsies, from whom they differed in Romani dialect, in dance, in music and in economic patterns.

As the build-up of Gypsies in urban areas was consolidated during the 1950s, the authorities became increasingly alarmed that the majority of these migrants were not vanishing amongst other town-dwellers but remained a distinctive and to some extent separate community. Post-War developments had not resulted in the swift elimination of undesirable



social features but instead the ever growing population concentrations, both in the Czech lands and Slovakia, were tending to perpetuate what was termed 'the backward gypsy way of life'.

The benign influence of civilised socialist surroundings was further diminished by the instability of these concentrations, the frequency with which Gypsies changed their residence and workplace. The complex migratory flow did not appear to be lessening and if the early movement to the Czech lands was acknowledged in the case of some Gypsies as a positive response to new opportunities "which they made use of . . . by taking regular employment and settling permanently" (Manual : 6), any subsequent movement was regarded as a repetition of former patterns, peculiar to Gypsies and only recently discontinued, and as proof that the nomadic urge was still powerfully present in these people.

After 1958 a sharp distinction was drawn between 'settled' Gypsies who had changed neither flat nor job after their arrival in the Czech lands (or else who had worked with corresponding regularity in Slovakia) and those who, "although having a permanent residence somewhere in Slovakia, nevertheless continually fluctuate between Slovakia and the Czech lands and from one Czech region to another. Because of this characteristic feature such Gypsies [were identified] as 'semi-settled' or 'semi-nomadic'." In this category were also included those few gypsy families who followed itinerant trades such as knife-grinders and tinkers without permission". (Manual : 34)

In spite of overwhelming historical evidence that the vast majority of Slovakian Gypsies had been settled for centuries and that as early as

the late nineteenth century only 2 per cent were nomadic and less than 6 per cent semi-nomadic (see Chapter Two), it was confidently asserted to the contrary that settling was an extremely recent phenomenon and that the majority of Gypsies continued their semi-nomadic way of life until 1958 and beyond.

### Settled Gypsies

To this category can be assigned those Gypsies where settling occurred at an earlier date - often in the previous generation or the generation before that. Their way of life does not differ fundamentally from that of other inhabitants . . . from whom they can be distinguished only by the colour of their skin and their physiognomy in which their Gypsy origin is evident. . . . They are in regular employment and to all intents and purposes have ceased to lead a Gypsy life . . .

### Semi-nomadic Gypsies

As yet\* most of our Gypsies must be assigned to this category which includes many inhabitants of the Gypsy settlements, noted for their backward way of life and low standards of accommodation. The employment of some semi-nomadic Gypsies is predominantly irregular, while some have no regular employment at all.

The term 'semi-nomadic Gypsies' (sometimes 'semi-settled Gypsies' is also used in its place) derives from the way of life they actually pursued until 1958 and sometimes afterwards. As a rule this group of Gypsies passed the winter months in their Gypsy settlements which they left in the spring to wander around in search of casual work until they returned once more to their settlements at the onset of winter. They usually moved from place to place by means of public transport and only exceptionally adopted the 'classical' manner of nomadic Gypsies who travelled with typical Gypsy carts.

Many semi-nomadic Gypsies travelled from Slovakia to seek work in the Czech lands and generally remained

---

\* In fact this quotation comes from a book published by the main Party academy in December 1968. However this fuller version of the distinction first made in 1958 is entirely compatible with earlier formulations. (See Chapter Four for the main 1958 formulation).

only until they were paid, whereupon they returned home again. When their resources were exhausted they set off once more for the Czech Lands in search of casual work.

(Nováček : 32, 33).

By categorising most migrant Gypsies as 'semi-nomadic' in this way, official documents lumped together, for all practical purposes, settlement Gypsies with the quite different and truly nomadic Vlachs and proceeded to brand both groups alike as social parasites:

The sad reality is that the 25,000 adult nomadic and semi-nomadic gypsies live largely to the detriment of our society, gaining their livelihood mainly by thefts, swindles and [illegal] dealing.

(Manual : 8).

This blanket condemnation was made in support of the demand to "eliminate from our socialist society an intolerable relic of the past - the nomadic way of life of a certain number of our gypsies, . . . a form unworthy of our society". (ibid.).

Given the specific historical development of Gypsies on Czechoslovakian territory it is absurd that 'nomadism' should have been invoked to explain the post-war migration without further analysis. Yet, in spite of a terminological shift in 1965, this interpretation was to remain dominant and as recently as 1971 a ministry report explained Gypsy migration by 'the historically-rooted proneness to nomadism in Gypsies'. (See below).

A leading American sociologist of migration wrote:

A social group at rest, or a social group in motion (e.g. nomads) tends to remain so unless impelled to change; for with any viable pattern of life a value system is developed to support that pattern. To analyse the migration of Gypsies, for example, in terms of push and pull is entirely inadequate - no better, in fact, than to explain modern western



migration, as Herbert Spencer did, in terms of  
'the restlessness inherited from ancestral nomads'.

(Petersen : 52).

Accepting Petersen's point, if it can be shown that certain Gypsies have been settled for a long period, the positions are reversed and it is inadequate to explain their subsequent movement as 'ancestral nomadism' as it is to explain anyone else's.

The Gypsies were regarded as a growing problem throughout the 1950s and although the far more important tasks of socialising industry and agriculture pre-empted party and government attention, it would be a mistake to assume that there was no official response to Gypsies before 1958.\*

As early as 1950 a government decree drew attention to the Gypsies' inferior living conditions and some local action was taken, especially in the Gypsy settlements of Slovakia, to improve amenities such as approach roads and public lighting. In 1952 a national conference of school teachers and local authority cultural workers was held to discuss the education of Gypsies (Manual : 31) and in the same year the Home Office issued a nation-wide directive to all local authorities urging them "to apply the same principles of socialist legality to Gypsies as to other citizens . . . to draw [them] more effectively into the constructive strength of our People's Democratic Republic". (quoted Kára : 53).

---

\* Ulč characterised the period between 1948 and 1958 as the "Silent Decade : No Policy". (Ulč : 422).

To implement this directive local authority co-ordinating committees were formed although they were disbanded the following year as an indirect result of a reorganisation of the state and local government apparatus. (1958 Decree).

Another educational conference was held in 1954 - this time of Slovakian teachers of Gypsy children - but 1954 was more significant as the first year in which the highest policy-making body of the Communist Party became actively involved in finding a rapid solution to the 'gypsy question'. In October the secretariat of the Central Committee discussed shortcomings and issued a decree, urging local authorities to greater involvement. The subsequent 1958 decree complained that the 1954 instructions had been misunderstood as advocating short-term rather than continuing action but it is evident that the Central Committee had not yet fully appreciated the complexity of the problem in 1954 (Kára : 54). However it is also apparent that local authority 'misunderstanding' also involved disinclination to take action for the later report of a Central Committee investigator was opposed by the Commission for the Control of Local Authorities - indicative of the conflict of interests between central and local government which was eventually to frustrate the 1958 policy.

This special report was based on the investigator's experience in Plzeň and Ostrava, two major centres of heavy industry which proved natural magnets for the incoming migrants to the Czech lands. Meanwhile some research had been undertaken in the Košice and Prešov regions of eastern Slovakia, two of the areas most heavily populated by Gypsies. (1958 Decree, Kára : 54). Although insubstantial, these probes marked the start of systematic study of the whole problem.

Rather than being a decade of inactivity the 1948-1958 period is better characterised as one of growing official involvement. Local authorities made sporadic attempts to cope with the unchecked migratory flow and the spreading population concentrations and eventually appealed directly to central government for guidance and help. In September 1957 a meeting of regional Party and local authority workers from all over the Republic called for a directive imposing a unified nation-wide policy to bring about a speedy solution to the 'gypsy question'. (1958 Decree). Meanwhile the leadership, too, had come to the conclusion that something more substantial was required than the previous piecemeal directives.

Eventually, in April 1958, the Politburo of the Communist Party Central Committee issued a decree described as "the first systematic Marxist analysis . . . and, it can be said, the first ever scientific sociological document on the gypsy question". (Sus : 76).

Although brief this important decree contained:

- i) An account of the nature of the 'gypsy question'.
- ii) An analysis of its historical origin and continuing presence in socialist society.
- iii) A dismissal of the alternative approaches of class society and a warning of their dangers to the policy of socialist assimilation.
- iv) A rationale justifying the adoption of the assimilation policy.

Seven months later Law 74/1958 "on the permanent settlement of nomads" was enacted and shortly afterwards a register of 'nomads' was compiled. At the same time a manual was issued to all local authorities which elaborated the arguments of the Central Committee and provided comprehensive instructions on implementing the policy and the law which was its chief instrument.



Law 74 marked the start of a massive, decade-long national campaign to raise the socio-economic level of Gypsies to that of other citizens by assimilating them into wider society. To accelerate this arduous process a strategy of maximum dispersal was adopted from the start but for this to be effective there had to be adequate means of regulating migration and for this reason the law itself and major measures thereafter were aimed at the direct control of Gypsy population movement.

The timing of the campaign can be explained partly by the fact that in the late 1950s Czechoslovakia was preparing for the transition from a People's Democracy to a Socialist Republic (declared in 1960). The XIth Party Congress in 1958 outlined a two-year plan for building socialism which included, among other things,

[a cultural revolution] whose content and goal is the creation of new socialist man - rid of all remnants of bourgeois ideology - conscious, educated and able to fully utilise all the possibilities of socialism in developing his capacities and to employ them for the benefit of a socialist society.

(Manual : 5).

The Gypsies struck a jarring note for:

we would not be able to talk of achieving a cultural revolution here if we left the group of our gypsy citizens with low cultural and living standards.

(ibid.)

To make the political embarrassment all the more acute, photographs of ragged and dirty Czechoslovakian Gypsies had been published in Life magazine, providing capitalist propaganda material, as the 1958 Party decree noted.

Yet another factor in the timing may have been the fact that in 1956 the Soviet Union issued a similar decree to ban Gypsy nomadism. A copy of this decree was attached as an appendix to the 1958 Czechoslovakian decree.

THE 1958 CENTRAL COMMITTEE DECREE.Some Problems of Documentation.

The decree of the Central Committee was, as such, a secret internal document to be circulated only among a limited number of Party, governmental and ministry workers. A publication for local authority consumption, embodying the main decisions of the decree and paraphrasing certain key passages, was the subsequent manual 'for official use only'.

Yet even this ample document was conspicuously reticent about the reasoning that lay behind the adoption of the policy, particularly as regards the rationale. Although the assimilation policy was unequivocally stated to be the only possible solution to the 'gypsy question' in accordance with Marxist-Leninist nationality theory, the underlying ideological rationale was not elaborated at length in any official document but appeared either in the form of terse, unsupported assertions or else remained implicit. For reasons discussed more fully in

Appendix Two the decision makers wanted to present the policy as a 'fait accompli' rather than run the risk of controversy in the explosive area of the rights of national minorities.

To amplify the blunt statements of the manual, therefore, they have been interspersed with more explicit quotations from an authoritative book published in Czechoslovakia three years after the initiation of the policy. The author, Jaroslav Sus, worked together with two principal co-authors of the manual\* in preparing 'The Gypsy Question in the

---

\* Viz. preface where Otakar Zeman of the Central Committee secretariat and Eva Bacíková, the Ministry of Education and Culture worker responsible for Gypsy affairs from the mid-1950s until 1968, were both mentioned.

Czechoslovakian Socialist Republic', which was later taken by Czechoslovak writers on nationality theory and on Gypsies (e.g. Šindelka, Hübšmannová etc.), as the definitive exposition of the 1958 policy. However it should be pointed out that the pre-eminence of Sus in the Czechoslovakian literature on Gypsies is not entirely because his account is far more comprehensive and systematic than that given in official documents but also for the sound political reason that in attacking Sus opponents of the 1958 policy were not openly challenging the Party.

This book is not without its drawbacks, for, like official documents, it did not offer any quotations from Marxist-Leninist classics to support the policy's confident claim to doctrinal orthodoxy. In their place was the ubiquitous phrase: "Marxism-Leninism teaches . . . ", introducing some unsubstantiated generalisation.

One explanation for this puzzling omission lies in the fact that the chief proponent of the theory was Stalin. In the tense years following the 1956 denunciation by Khrushchev, any quotation from his works or even mention of his name would have proved politically embarrassing to the leadership of the Czechoslovakian Party which remained Stalinist-dominated until Novotný's overthrow in 1968.\* Possibly another reason is that any attempt to 'quote the scriptures' might have provoked opponents to follow suit, for damaging ammunition was certainly not lacking, as appendix demonstrates.

---

\* The supreme example of such embarrassment was the massive and costly stone statue of Stalin which the luckless Czechs had recently erected on a hillside to dominate Prague's 'Old Town' quarter. After a period of painful deliberation the monument was eventually demolished overnight.



The Nature of the 'Gypsy Question'.

It might appear from the preceding section that policy makers in Czechoslovakia saw the 'gypsy question' as a troublesome complex of various types of anti-social behaviour that included absenteeism, alcoholism, petty-theft and maltreatment of children. While this is true, it is only partially so for these elements were perceived as the outward manifestations of a much deeper problem - the fundamental socio-economic gulf separating Gypsies from other citizens.

"What is the gypsy question then?" asked Sus rhetorically, and answered:

Its basis is the discrepancy between, on the one hand, the production methods and associated high cultural level of a socialist society and, on the other, the exceptionally low level of social life of the gypsy population. . . . This discrepancy can be solved only by a consciously-undertaken, planned policy of assimilation; this means enabling gypsies to pass into a higher social and cultural environment, merging with its social structure and cultural standards.

(Sus : 11).

Origins and Persistence.

The 1958 Party decree characterised 'the gypsy way of life' as a mixture of undesirable remnants of previous social orders, including such elements as nomadism, tribalism, animism and blood-feuds. In similar vein the 1959 handbook for local authorities declared:

over the majority of our gypsy citizens yet stretches as a black cloud the burdensome heritage of the past,

(Manual : 6)

or more prosaically:

As a result of oppression and persecution by the ruling classes, [gypsies] were stamped with characteristic features of a way of life and psychological nature which are nowadays an anachronism and must be removed by a process of socialist education.

(ibid., 26, 27).

The argument was that the 'gypsy way of life' (embodying traditions, value-systems and attitudes), which had been formed - or rather deformed - by the bitter historical experience of centuries of oppression under feudalism and capitalism, had been carried over into a period and form of society in which it no longer had any relevance. Resistance to change was perpetuated merely by the fact that Gypsies usually lived with other Gypsies in 'undesirable concentrations'. The 'gypsy way of life', therefore, was akin to a dangerous, contagious disease for which the only effective remedy was isolation from other sufferers and a hefty dose of socialist re-education.

Looking at Gypsies in this way, the policy makers naturally saw little point in preserving a separate identity for these people. This was to be eliminated as rapidly as possible by dispersing Gypsies, thus destroying their previous social life and bringing them into contact with new, progressive patterns. Assimilation was felt to be in their own best interests for:

experience shows that all forms, which revive gypsy national [sic!] consciousness, their own special organisation and autonomy, preserve the present isolation and separation of gypsies from the remainder of the population, prevent the penetration of everything progressive from our environment to the life of gypsies and help conserve the old primitive gypsy way of life with all its bad habits.

(ibid., 28)

The intention to dissolve the Gypsies' separate identity was reflected in terminological changes in official usage, just as it had been in the time of Maria Theresa. Although official documents did not go to the lengths of renaming Gypsies 'new workers' or 'new Slovaks', they gradually came to adopt the standard formulation 'citizen of gypsy origin', which had the advantage of unambiguously denoting Gypsies yet at the same time suggesting that this was really a previous identity. This formulation also incorporated the essential contradiction in the official attitude towards them for while 'Gypsy' was no longer to exist as a valid identity, a whole series of measures were introduced directed specifically at Gypsies.

Both in the description of the manifestations of the 'gypsy question' and in the explanation of its origin and perpetuation, the 1958 Czechoslovakian analysis turned out to be an Eastern European variant of the 'culture of poverty' approach to disadvantaged strata and minorities. For example, Michael Harrington's account of the poor in the United States could well have been an official report on Gypsies in Czechoslovakia.

Taken as a whole, poverty is a culture. Taken on the family level, it has the same quality. These are people who lack education and skill, who have bad health, poor housing, low levels of aspiration, and high levels of mental distress. They are, in the language of sociology, 'multi-problem' families.

(Harrington : 158).

Likewise the analysis of the 'gypsy way of life' as a pathological heritage, perpetuated in 'undesirable concentrations' and which prevented their adaptation to the new opportunities of socialist society, echoed the view that:



the poor constitute a distinctive culture or community within society; . . . the experiences, attitudes, and values generated in poor communities are passed on from one generation to the next in a never-ending cycle . . . '[by means of their] effect on the children. By the time slum-children are age six or seven they have usually absorbed the basic attitudes and values of their subculture, and are not psychologically geared to take full advantage of changing conditions or increased opportunities which may occur in their lifetime'.

(Lewis, quoted Coates and Silburn : 138,9).

Such similarity of views should not be entirely unexpected, for the development of a 'culture of poverty' by the poor in the Americas and by the Gypsies in Czechoslovakia alike was a defensive reaction "to their marginal position in a class-stratified, highly individuated, capitalistic society". (ibid.). The difference lay in the fact that, following its socialist transformation, Czechoslovakia was both able and determined to remedy the situation by drastic action, unlike western capitalist societies where "there has been a great deal of emphasis on the social and personal pathologies that accompany poverty, . . . shifting the focus of attention from the cause of the situation - low income - to its effects, . . . to neutralise society's anxiety and discomfort". (Rainwater : 516).

#### Alternative Approaches and their Dangers.

The situation of the Gypsies had already been transformed formally by the 1945 declaration against ethnic discrimination, cancelling restrictions on their movement and employment, and also in practice by the post-War industrial expansion that gave them their opportunity to participate for the first time on a mass scale in the economic mainstream. However it was judged insufficient to rely wholly on the impetus

from such fundamental changes in society to bring about a successful resolution of the 'gypsy question' for

although such optimism demonstrates unlimited faith in the healthy development of our system, it cannot be in itself the substitute for a planned, scientific solution of major problems in our society.

(Sus : cover).

In any case the Gypsies were thought to be incapable of making proper use of their new opportunities without the help of special measures - such as dispersal - to bring them into close contact with new patterns.

[Although] gypsies have a considerable capacity for passive assimilation and acculturation, they are incapable of attaining a higher level by their own efforts without the assistance of higher cultural surroundings.

(Sus : 53)

Apart from the alternative of taking no specific action and relying on the socialist revolution to solve everything, three other approaches to the 'gypsy question' were mentioned - forcible assimilation, racism and autonomy. Since all were characterised as unsuccessfully attempted solutions in previous class society they were hardly considered as viable options for a socialist state. Nevertheless they had to be taken into consideration for it was recognised that predilection for these approaches might linger in popular attitudes and in this way jeopardize the effectiveness of the assimilation policy.

The general argument ran that previous efforts at forcible assimilation had been self-defeating due to the internal contradictions of such a policy; in essence they had been attempts by class society to resolve a problem constantly regenerated by the fundamental inequalities inherent in such a society. Ultimate success only became a possibility,

therefore, once there had emerged a form of society with a basis other than structured inequality.

More specifically, even a humanitarian assimilation attempt was doomed to failure by the irrevocably antagonistic nature of class society. The allocation of the considerable resources required to carry out such a policy would inevitably arouse the hostility of other class elements struggling to improve their own position. In the face of such opposition the assimilation attempt would either lapse or else would be renewed by increasingly extreme measures in a vain endeavour to overcome the resistance of those elements frustrating its success. However this escalation would only have the effect of provoking the Gypsies, so that even the ultimate beneficiaries of the policy joined the ranks of its opponents.\*

The systematic policy of Maria Theresa and the weak attempts made during the bourgeois First Republic were cited as variants of such predetermined failure:

If we consider the policy of Maria Theresa, at first sight it appears that some of the measures were not at all bad requirements in themselves (e.g. settling, employment etc.). However, the whole administrative approach involving forcible means to attain swift assimilation could not have ended in success.

Likewise the 'educationalist' assimilatory solution [of the 1930s], aimed only at cultural re-education and totally neglecting the aspect of work, could not have achieved the desired result.

The effect of such attempts was to intensify the Gypsies' mistrust of all measures taken by institutes, official

---

\*

This whole process is an instance of Stalin's first dialectic. See the first appendix for a full discussion of Marxist-Leninist nationality theory.



bodies and society in general and so to reinforce still further their total isolation. Thus assimilatory efforts in pre-socialist forms of society led to consequences that were completely contrary to the policy-makers' intentions . . .

Class society has been unable to find a positive and fundamental solution to the gypsy question in a single instance, either in practice or theoretically. . . . Nor is it capable of this, for it cannot ensure the basic material conditions for the Gypsies' systematic re-education and assimilation. Its assimilation policy, therefore, necessarily reverts to a bureaucratic and forcible approach.\*

These are the main features and aspects in which the assimilation policies of previous social orders differ from the Marxist approach to gypsy assimilation.

(Sus : 95, 96).

It is a pity that forcible assimilation was not examined in greater detail, especially in view of the apparent resemblance of Maria Theresa's attempt to its 1958 successor. For, in spite of the claim that assimilation attempts in class society were totally unlike 'the Marxist approach to gypsy assimilation' both in conception and in application, it is still not clear to what extent the pre-socialist assimilationists' belief in the cultural and racial inferiority of the Gypsies differed from the later pessimistic 'culture of poverty' view that the Gypsies' culture and social structure had been so deformed by their experience of oppression that the only remedy was a wholesale transplant of culture and identity. Even less obvious is the dividing line between the 'bureaucratic and forcible approach' . . . of previous social orders' and certain dubious measures of the 1958 policy, especially Law 74 itself.

---

\* Emphasis in the original.

However an adequate answer to these important questions cannot be given until the operation of the policy has been examined in later chapters. At this stage it must suffice to register the doubts and moreover to record that the policy-makers explicitly denied that their measures were discriminatory.

We must bear in mind that the whole re-education process necessitates special measures during the transition period. In such cases we should not regret the time spent in explaining, both to gypsies and to other members of the public, that these measures do not have a discriminatory character, for their consequences lead only to a speeding-up of re-education - and thereby benefit our gypsy fellow-citizens.

(Manual : 20)

Indeed an outright pledge was given that there would be no discrimination:

Our socialist society rules out any kind of discrimination whatsoever and ensures the political, material and social environment that provides favourable preconditions for the gradual removal of all the injustices and relics of exploitative social orders from the life of our gypsy fellow-citizens.

(ibid. : 23)

Sus was equally outspoken: "Marxism-Leninism condemns and rejects a forcible and bureaucratic way of undertaking a policy of assimilation". (Sus : 98).

Evidently there can have been few fears that a mistakenly 'forcible and bureaucratic' approach would be employed, either on a national or a local level, for the 1959 handbook did not contain any specific warnings on the danger or case histories illustrating over-zealous action, unless criticism of local authorities who foolishly rehoused nomadic Gypsies in luxury flats is interpreted in this way. A far greater practical threat was anticipated from advocates of the two other approaches of racialism

and autonomy, both of which were "harmful, for the one like the other drives gypsies into isolation and revives undesirable gypsy separatism". (ibid. : 111).

Although racism was quite out of the question as a policy option, its danger lay in the fact that its sympathisers were numerous. In some cases they occupied official posts and were thereby in a position to frustrate the smooth implementation of the assimilation policy by their opposition.

Sus frankly drew attention to racism, particularly in Slovakia.

Most frequently we meet with these [relics of racist thinking] in Slovakia, particularly in those regions which were in the past bastions of the former fascist Hlinka regime and where also gypsies were persecuted in the most brutal manner . . . Many previous . . . Hlinka guards sometimes even today . . . have an ideological influence on citizens and incite them against gypsies.

(ibid.)

There was also a milder form of discrimination against Gypsies.

Frequently entire local government councils or else their individual members refuse to solve the gypsy housing problem. They resist resettling gypsy families amongst other people and try to prevent them from moving into empty flats among non-gypsies. By means of bureaucratic methods they make it difficult for gypsies to build a family house outside the gypsy settlement among other people, and often make it impossible for them to obtain a building plot and the like.

(ibid.)

Nor was this discrimination confined to the area of desegregating housing, but extended also to the workplace.

The management of many works either resists employing gypsies or . . . after accepting them pays no attention to their further training. There are cases of discrimination against gypsies by giving them heavy, tiring work that no-one else wants to do or inferior jobs where no qualifications are required.

(ibid.)



The amount of racist opposition to the policy and the extent to which it was successfully countered can be properly evaluated only after a discussion of the policy in action, but it is important to emphasize at this stage that the danger had been recognised at the outset.

While racism provided the greatest practical threat to the 1958 policy, its major theoretical challenge came from advocates of autonomy, for this approach alone could offer at least a 'prima facie' claim to consideration as a socialist alternative to assimilation.

It was simple enough to ridicule fanciful pre-war schemes for a Gypsy republic of Romanistan somewhere in Africa or benevolent state support for nomadism by employing nomadic Gypsies as itinerant road-menders and to argue convincingly that 'Romantic' demands for autonomy and preservation of 'the Gypsy way of life' were usually "fundamentally rooted in a racialist outlook concealed beneath an apparently humanist exterior". (Sus : 91).

However, new demands were made in post-war socialist society, which were "especially dangerous because of their deceptively humanist and democratic character". (Sus : 86). The escalating official activity on all levels stimulated debate about the ideological basis for action and led some to argue that the Gypsies constituted a nationality question rather than a social problem.

During the earlier 1950s . . . there was frequent discussion of the proposal by some [official workers in the field and members of the Gypsy intelligentsia] that the so-called Gypsy question should be treated as a nationality problem and the case of the Soviet Union was cited as a precedent. There, the Gypsy question was handled in this way from 1926 until 1935 as part of the general policy towards lesser nationalities of the USSR.

(Kára : 385).

This broadening and disturbing debate was not entirely silenced by the 1958 Party decree, even though to persist with such suggestions implicitly questioned the decision to adopt a policy of assimilation. Sometimes an overt appeal was made to Marxist-Leninist nationality theory in support of nationalist demands, thus offering a direct challenge to the legitimacy of the Party's conclusion that this theory was not relevant to the case of the Gypsies.

Despite the fact that in the decree of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party the correct Marxist-Leninist conclusion has been reached that the gypsy population does not form a nationality, several individuals, mainly from the ranks of the intelligentsia (sometimes gypsy too), approach work among the gypsies by making a nationality problem of it, with demands for special gypsy education with teaching given in the gypsy language, for the publication of newspapers and literature in the gypsy language and for the formation of a separate gypsy association. In this matter it is also necessary to condemn incorrect opinions printed in some of our magazines.

The decree of the Czechoslovak C.P. Central Committee emphatically opposes these efforts with the words : 'Experience to date shows that if attempts such as these were put into practice it would retard the re-education process of gypsies, it would strengthen the undesirable isolation of gypsies from the life of other workers and it would help to conserve still further the old, primitive way of gypsy life'.

(Manual : 21, 22)

The pre-war spokesmen had generally been non-Gypsies, speculating on what would be in the Gypsies' best interests, but now not only were individual Gypsies expressing their own demands but they were making use of democratic procedures to rally wider Gypsy support for their views. The 1959 manual mentioned that:

at meetings of Gypsies from Bardejov [E. Slovakia] last year and also from the Bratislava region and elsewhere we encountered . . . opinions of several individuals which afterwards were expressed as resolutions and accepted by gypsy meetings. They called, for example, for school teaching in the gypsy language and the like.

(ibid. : 26).

Something had to be done to prevent the assimilation policy being undermined by such activity. It was a simple matter to prevent the propagation of such views in newspapers, books and magazines by an administrative instruction but, as Sus noted, "while it is true that such opinions [as suggesting a revival of Gypsy culture] are not openly published since the C.P....decree of April 1958, this does not mean, however, that they do not exist in the minds of many people". (Sus : 37).

The most persistent opponents of the assimilation policy were discouraged from voicing their criticisms by more informal means, as a leading Gypsiologist later recalled when political developments allowed freer expression:

When, ten years ago, I called attention to the problem, my views were regarded as either 'Gypsy bourgeois nationalism' or 'discrimination against Gypsies'.

(Hübschmannová quoted Ulč : 422).



A leading member of the Gypsy intelligentsia in Slovakia was more explicit:

Already in 1957 we wanted a Gypsy folk-group and magazine. However I requested this by myself for the organisation of any group was still banned then. If I had collected signatures they could have imprisoned me as a matter of course. . . . [An official] from the C.P. Central Committee with responsibility for censorship and the so-called Gypsy question . . . began to say that I was a Gypsy bourgeois nationalist who wanted to separate the Gypsies. The party and Government line was assimilation. . . . Gypsies themselves want to assimilate and even if they didn't, assimilation would be better for them. I said to him: 'Look here, I'll bring you a thousand signatures that we want our magazine and folk-group'. 'You had better not', he said. 'That sort of thing is against the law'. In short he threatened me with the police.

(Hübschmannová : 37).

This was no idle warning at a time when several leading Communists had recently been imprisoned for Slovak 'bourgeois nationalism', among them Gustav Husák who was to become the Party's First Secretary a decade later.

The Rationale.

While opponents were successfully intimidated into silence, the argument was re-iterated in official documents and to a lesser degree in the mass media that the assimilation policy was the only authentically Marxist-Leninist approach to the 'gypsy question'.

How the Gypsies should be characterised has been a basic problem facing all administrators and researchers concerned with them. As has been argued above administrators in western Europe have tended to define them as a social rather than an ethnic group, since this not only envisages their ultimate assimilation into the proletariat but allows local authorities a freer hand with their harassment to achieve this end, since there is less danger of being indicted for discrimination. (This modern western variant of 'forcible assimilation' has been undertaken primarily for the negative reason of eliminating Gypsies as a troublesome yet relatively minor social problem, as opposed to the positive motive underlying its more systematic eastern counterpart where the much larger Gypsy populations of eastern Europe have always been seen as potentially productive labour power).

In their practice western administrators have been aided by the theoretical confusion within the field of social anthropology. Theorists have pursued a fruitless search for definitive objective criteria of an ethnic group and by their inconclusive findings have given the impression that the common classification of Gypsies as an ethnic group by recent empirical researchers (e.g. Barth : 31; Adams ) rests on no sound theoretical basis and can safely be ignored by legislators.\*

---

\* The similarity of the problems encountered by social anthropologists and Marxist-Leninist theorists seeking necessary criteria is discussed at greater length in appendix three.

Czechoslovakian Gypsies had been defined for census-taking purposes in 1921 and again in 1930 as a national minority but in the meantime legislators saw this as no hindrance in defining them in terms of a way of life (i.e. as a social group) in the 1927 law to allow maximum flexibility in controlling Gypsies and also non-Gypsy itinerants. This procedure was fully compatible with the 'modern' Austrian approach of the 1880s on which the new law was based.

Socialist policy-makers confronted what was basically the same problem in the late 1950s. However in this instance the matter was transformed from the remote and academic question of western Europe, where only an empty formal status was at stake, for, according to Marxist-Leninist nationality theory, the recognition of the Gypsies as a national minority would entail the concession to them of certain guaranteed group rights.

Accordingly the forthright denial of the Gypsies' eligibility for national minority status was of prime importance since it served as a theoretical rationale underpinning the whole assimilation policy.

The main argument was straightforward enough. Marxist-Leninist nationality theory was only applicable to nations and national minorities. Since the Gypsies lacked at least one and possibly all four of Stalin's necessary characteristics of a nation, they were neither nation nor national minority and were not then entitled to any recognition or rights as a group, but only individually as ordinary citizens. Nor was there any prospect of them ever becoming a nation or national minority.

Gypsies are not a nation nor a nationality and with regard to the objective conditions of their existence (lack of homogeneity, dispersion, low cultural level etc.), neither can they become a nationality nor even a national minority in the future.

(Sus : 11).



Of the four characteristics - territory, language, economic life and culture - it was the lack of territory that was most often cited. However their prima facie more plausible claim to the ~~the~~ other characteristics was also attacked.

From the Marxist-Leninist standpoint gypsies lack the basic characteristic social features by which we could regard them as a nation. Nowhere in the world do gypsies form a nation - they live considerably dispersed and, for the most part, they have adapted themselves linguistically and culturally to the nation in whose land they live.

(Manual : 22)

Subsidiary arguments were also advanced which conceded that the assimilation policy might have the effect of eliminating remnants of national characteristics among the Gypsies. However the state of decay of Gypsies' own social patterns and culture was judged to be so extreme that it precluded any attempt at revival and consequently the social aspects of the problem were paramount. Sus expressed this view:

The main aim is therefore social and cultural changes of which a by-product is changes in some ethnic features which nowadays are only feebly manifested and in the process of withering away. With regard to the existence of these ethnic features and to the objective solution of the gypsy question it is not possible to deny that in several respects this process also involves nationality problems. In the gypsy question however this aspect is secondary and incidental; it is subordinated to the question of social and cultural education.

(Sus : 11)

Although some of these characteristics might have been more pronounced in the past, they were fast diminishing in importance because Gypsies were, in any case, apparently undergoing a gradual process of assimilating with the Czech and Slovak nations. This was not an unexpected development for,

there is no necessity for all ethnic communities to develop independently and this is equally true under Socialism. In the process of historical development some of these groups merge with the compact community of other nations.

In this way gypsies are naturally merging with the surrounding population in the process of historical evolution. This is proved by the fact that some of our gypsies no longer know the gypsy language and in no way acknowledge their gypsy origin.

(Manual : 27)

Sus went even further, claiming that:

The entire historical development of the gypsies . . . and above all our own intense and very fruitful activities, convince us that the process of assimilating the gypsy population is an objectively unavoidable natural law.

(Sus : 108).

Since the assimilatory trend was approved as 'progressive', the policy could be presented as a means to assist a beneficial and naturally occurring tendency, while conversely any opposition could be condemned not merely as dissent from a Party decree but as vain resistance to the course of history.

To work against the objectively continuing disintegration of the gypsy ethnic group would be incorrect and in the last analysis reactionary. To the contrary it is necessary to speed up and accelerate this process and pursue it to its end.

(Sus : 100).

Other more extreme arguments had ominous implications for all minority groups in Czechoslovakia, for they flatly stated that even had the Gypsies formally constituted a nationality problem, any separate development would have probably conflicted with the interests of socialism and therefore would have been subordinated to this higher goal.

In the short term the main concern in Czechoslovakia of the late 1950s was socialist construction in preparation for the planned transition to a socialist republic in 1960 and this took precedence over all national interests.

The nationality question, like every other phenomenon, does not exist entirely on its own. With every nationalist movement it is necessary to distinguish whether it serves socialism, for not every nationalist movement is a progressive movement. History knows not a few reactionary nationalist movements which were a brake to the progressive development of society preventing the growth of consciousness in the masses. Under socialism the national question is subordinated to the tasks of socialist construction. For this reason the national question and also the gypsy question in Czechoslovakia are subordinated to the tasks of building socialism in our state.

(Manual : 27,28).

There was also the general question about the long term development of ethnic communities within a socialist society. In particular the continued existence of national minorities and ethnic groups was in considerable doubt for it was argued that the transition to Communism involved their rapid disappearance.

Marxism-leninism admits considerable importance to assimilation and integration. The assimilation of ethnic communities is one of the preconditions which hastens the elimination of class society and the transition to communism. Marxism still recognises for the present the necessary existence of the most developed ethnic units - nations, however, even their continuance and permanence is regarded as historically relative. Their isolation is at present gradually being overcome. Assimilation is a generally valid evolutionary law affecting all ethnic groups alike, it depends only on the concrete historical, economic and political conditions, in what way and with what intensity this or that ethnic group will adapt itself. . . . Marxism-Leninism recognises as correct those actions which consciously accelerate the naturally continuing assimilation process, presupposing however that they are in accordance with the demands of progressive development.

(Sus : 98).



The evaluation of the involved rationale is of crucial importance for on its validity depends the ultimate legitimacy of the assimilation policy as an application of Marxist-Leninist nationality theory. However, having given an account of the stated rationale, the next step cannot be a direct comparison with some acknowledged, organised body of doctrine for Marxist-Leninist nationality theory does not exist in a compact and codified form.

Marx and Engels never developed a comprehensive nationality theory as such and Lenin's thoughts on the subject are mostly extant as fragments of published speeches. The core of Marxist-Leninist nationality theory is located in Stalin's 'Marxism and the National Question', written in 1913 on Lenin's instructions, and Stalin's attempt to define the essence of nationality is still the starting-point for contemporary Soviet debate. However there are problems of interpretation and any adequate account of Marxist-Leninist nationality theory must supplement this basic work by later speeches as well as by polemics since Stalin's fall.

To maintain the flow of the narrative it is advisable to postpone a fuller consideration of the complexities of the theory until the first appendix, but at this point it can be stated that the manner in which the rationale was presented was extremely misleading.

By their assertion that the assimilation policy was the only ideologically acceptable option available to them, the Czechoslovakian policy-makers deliberately implied that Marxist-Leninist nationality theory was a straightforward doctrine which, when applied to the case of the Gypsies, gave a simple, unequivocal answer. Nothing could be further from the truth, for, rather than consisting of a single unified body of

doctrine on which all leading theorists are in agreement, Marxist-Leninist nationality theory contains two alternative and conflicting interpretations which have been opposed in Marxist debate from the time of Marx and Engels until the present-day polemics of Soviet academicians. These rival approaches to ethnic community development point to diametrically opposed policies to be pursued by a socialist state.

THE ASSIMILATIONIST APPROACH sees nationalism as little more than a temporary by-product of class formation and, as such, having no value other than as a possible means to hasten the socialist revolution. Nationality and other forms of ethnicity consequently have no positive significance when the socialist era is reached and will disappear rapidly before the communist phase.

The Policy for a Socialist State should therefore be to encourage the assimilation ('merging') of national and ethnic minorities, interpreting any resistance by them as due to reactionary elements, guilty of bourgeois nationalism.

THE PLURALIST APPROACH acknowledges a greater continuity of ethnic identity under pre- and post-capitalist conditions. Capitalism created great inequalities between nations and between nationalities and consequently interests and accompanying loyalties often followed ethnic rather than class lines. The socialist revolution, in itself, does not eradicate these inequalities automatically and further deterioration of relations can only be avoided by a conscious and determined programme to redress the balance. Any assimilation during the socialist period will only take place if entirely voluntary and probably only after a virtual renaissance of ethnic communities.

The Policy for a Socialist State should therefore be to encourage the development ('flourishing') of national and ethnic minorities, interpreting any resistance by majority groups as due to reactionary elements, guilty of "great power chauvinism decked by a mask of internationalism". (Stalin).

The general argument of appendix<sup>1</sup> not only reveals the deceptive simplification and distortion embodied in the 1958 rationale but in addition, although not specifically concerned with Gypsies, provides substantial support for the charge that while the policy to assimilate Gypsies in Czechoslovakia resembles more closely the 'assimilationist' interpretation of the theory, it is the rival 'pluralist' version that has the stronger claim to Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy.

Although the theoretical legitimation of the policy is of undeniable importance, it would be a mistake to over-estimate its significance as a deciding factor in the adoption of the policy. Indeed many officials had little patience for elaborate justifications and the journal 'Demografie' stated their position succinctly:

Under socialism it is totally unthinkable to build some 'socialist and national' gypsy culture on the basis of something which is very primitive, backward, essentially often even negative and lacking in advanced tradition. . . . The question is not whether the Gypsies are a nation but how to assimilate them.

(quoted Ulc<sup>v</sup> : 440)

It would be particularly naive to assume that the decision to assimilate the Gypsies was simply a matter of accepting a deduction, albeit tortuous, from rules prescribed in Marxist-Leninist texts. Perhaps such a rigorous analysis was made, though there is little enough evidence of it in official documents, but given the widely divergent interpretations



of the nationality theory it is highly probable that in any case the choice of policy was influenced more by current political requirements in Czechoslovakia than by theoretical considerations. In particular any assessment of the reasons for the adoption, in 1958, of a policy of Gypsy assimilation must take into account the broader context of ethnic relations in Czechoslovakia as a whole.

At the time the treatment of other ethnic communities, especially of Slovaks, was aimed at containing any separate national development and in view of this overall policy it was very unlikely that an exception would have been made for the Gypsies, even had their credentials for national minority status been stronger. Indeed the 1958 Gypsy policy was far from the unique and isolated phenomenon it appeared; to the contrary it represented the most extreme case of a general assimilatory trend.

However, a philosophy of assimilationism had been equally dominant during the period of the First Republic and in order to understand this continuing approach, common to bourgeois and communist administrations alike, it is necessary at this point to make a brief survey of the development of inter-ethnic rivalry in Czechoslovakia. Likewise, to appreciate the strength of ethnic tensions beneath the surface of post-Second World War Czechoslovakian society, an excursion must be made beyond the 1958 watershed reached by the general narrative to the political liberalisation of 1968, in which such pressures were a major causal factor. Only in that year could accumulated grievances be expressed openly and this led to a formal revision of the status of the Slovak nation and of other national minorities within the Republic as well as to a reconsideration of the Gypsies' position.

A much fuller treatment of this complex subject, which supports the generalisations of the following section, is given in Appendix Two.

### Ethnic Tensions in post-War Czechoslovakia.

The inevitable socio-economic imbalances resulting from the uneven development of pre-socialist society had not necessarily exacerbated ethnic tensions for while the rise of capitalism in western Europe led to fierce competition between the metropolitan powers for colonies and foreign markets, this process was generally accompanied by the consolidation of ethnic communities within these states into relatively homogeneous 'national' populations.

In eastern Europe, however, where multi-national states had been formed in face of the Turkish threat and where absolutist feudal regimes survived well into the nineteenth century, the impact of capitalist development had signalled an era of national awakening for hitherto 'non-historical' peoples. Rather than consolidating, the populations of these states split along ethnic lines and relations between them became increasingly embittered as rival communities jockeyed for political and economic dominance. Nor did the eventual fragmentation of such states at the end of the First World War resolve these conflicts for the supposedly 'national' successor states were as mixed in ethnic composition as their predecessors.

The movement which dismembered Austria-Hungary and created Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia was bound to be succeeded by movements for the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. Given the premises of nationalism the process was natural and legitimate and no end could be set to it.

(Carr : 24).

In the newly-formed state of Czechoslovakia the inter-war centrist governments attempted to contain the centrifugal national minority parties of the Right by a policy of calculated concessions to their demands for increased autonomy. Ultimately this strategy failed and in 1938 the Republic fragmented under pressure from the dissatisfied German, Slovak, Hungarian, Polish and Ruthenian minorities.

During the First Republic (1918-1938) the Social Democrats and Communists on the Left had, on the whole, argued the precedence of class before nationality and had consequently advocated a unitary and centralised socialist state. The pre-conditions for realising this aim were eventually provided by the post-war election victory of the Communist party.

The new government first of all took swift action to bring about a drastic reduction in the size and proportion of ethnic minorities in the reconstituted Republic. Then centralist pressures against 'bourgeois nationalists' in the late 1940s were intensified during the 1950s in preparation for the transition to a socialist republic in 1960. The long-term goal of an ethnically and socially homogeneous population was seen as the sole certain guarantee against any future repetition of the nightmarish disintegration of 1938.

To remove the basis of nationalist grievances which had destroyed the First Republic the Communist regime pursued a vigorous policy of economic equalisation, notably the industrialisation of Slovakia,\* and

---

\* A leading Czech economist stated that in 1937 "Slovakia was 70 years behind Bohemia-Moravia in economic development". (Selucký)



assumed the problem to have been solved. However no concessions were made to the subtler aspects of nationalist feeling and although the Slovaks were formally recognised as a separate nation in the constitution, their distinct identity found little expression in political and administrative institutions.

Barely aware of nationality problems and of the need to respect the national liberty of the Slovak people, the pre-1968 Communist party line to the contrary often exacerbated the contradictions.

(Jičínský : 3, 4)

This inability to comprehend the full dimensions of the national problem and the insistence on the adequacy of a narrowly deterministic analysis in terms of economic factors alone had its precedent in the inter-War period when the Party failed to appreciate the complex motives behind Slovak Communists' demands for Slovakian autonomy.

Evidently the [Czechoslovakian Communist party] failed to appreciate the delicacies and dangers of Slovak nationalism....The solution of the national problem was for them secondary; the social problem was the dominant one. In analysing nationalism with the assistance of the Marxist vocabulary of base and superstructure, the Communists were unable to sense the irrational and emotional drivers of the recently awakened Slovaks. There is little doubt that the radicalism of the Slovak Communists originated in a variety of objective causes, such as increased exploitation, rising unemployment, extreme poverty in some parts of the country, and the mistakes and failures of Prague..... Yet the subjective elements should be remembered as well - the thirst for self-expression and self-rule, national pride, and the hatred of all capitalist systems.

(Jelinek : 80).

Yet not all non-Slovak Party members were so insensitive and the supporters of the 1924 Comintern line\* included Bacílek (later to head

---

\* In 1924 the Fifth Congress of the Communist International advocated 'a Leninist line in national problems' and emphasised the 'right of self-determination to the point of separation' in the case of Slovakia. This line closely resembled the Pluralist approach outlined above.

the Slovakian branch of the Party under Novotný) and Gottwald (first Communist president of Czechoslovakia from 1948 to 1953), who even at one point advocated Slovakian secession from the First Republic. (ibid: 77, 78). When such former champions of Slovakian autonomy eventually assumed power, these same men presided over renewed Slovakian political subordination.

The centralism of the late 1940s and 1950s failed to eliminate nationalist pressures but instead drove them underground; when they surfaced they were a major factor in toppling the Stalinist Novotný regime. Nationality problems re-emerged, in 1968, in disturbingly familiar forms as the Slovaks pressed for federal status for Slovakia, whilst the largest national minority, the Hungarians, voiced renewed demands for border revisions in favour of Hungary.

In rejecting autocratic centralism not only as a violation of democracy in general but also of the rights of nationalities the post-Novotný leadership acknowledged the injustice of the previous party line on the national question. Federalisation of the Republic, after fifty years of sustained Slovak efforts, and the enactment of a new national minorities law represented, therefore, a return to the 'Leninist' line advocated by the Comintern in 1924. Instead of enforcing unity within the Republic with the simplistic justification that the sole basis of separate ethnic identity - economic inequality - was being eliminated, the alternative approach was adopted of recognising the independent existence of ethnic communities and seeking their voluntary co-operation on a basis of mutual trust. This was the intention, at least, in the liberalising days of 1968 but the broader political democratisation, which alone could foster such developments, was soon to be destroyed in the aftermath of the Warsaw Pact invasion of August 1968.

MAIN SOURCES AND REFERENCES FORCHAPTER THREE.a. Gypsies in Czechoslovakia

- Davidová and Guy - in 'Race Today'. March 1972, pp.82-84.
- W. Guy - in 'Gypsies, Tinkers and Other Travellers', ed. F. Rehfish. Academic, 1974.
- M. Hübšmannová - 'cikáni = Cikáni?' Reportérova Ročenka, 1968. Prague, 1968.
- K. Kára et al. - 'Ke společenské problematice Cikánů v ČSSR.' ÚFS CSAV, Prague, 1975.
- Manual - 'Práce mezi cikánským obyvatelstvem'. Úřad předsednictva vlády. Prague, 1959.
- J. Nováček - 'Cikáni včera, dnes a zítra'. Socialistická akademie, Prague, 1968.
- J. Sus - 'Cikánská otázka v ČSSR'. Státní nakladatelství politické literatury. Prague, 1961.
- Z. Jamnická-Šmerglová - 'Dějiny našich cikánů'. Orbis, Prague, 1955.
- O. Ulč - 'Communist National Minority Policy : The Case of the Gypsies in Czechoslovakia'. Soviet Studies, April, 1969.

b. Gypsies in Europe

- B. Adams et al., - 'Gypsies and Government Policy in England'. Heinemann, London, 1975.
- F. Barth - 'Ethnic Groups and Boundaries'. George Allen and Unwin, London, 1969.
- A.M. Fraser - 'The High Court Defines Gypsies'. JGLS. Vol.47, Pts. 1 and 2, 1968.
- H. Gentleman and S. Swift - 'Scotland's Travelling People'. HMSO., Edinburgh, 1971.
- M. Kaminski - Private information from research still in progress.
- G. Puxon - 'Rom : Europe's Gypsies'. Minority Rights Group, London, 1973.



c. General History etc.

- K. Coates and R. Silburn - 'Poverty : the Forgotten Englishmen'. Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1970.
- E.H. Carr - 'Nationalism and After', Macmillan, London, 1945.
- M. Harrington - 'The Other America', Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1963.
- Y. Jelinek - 'Nationalism in Slovakia and the Communists, 1918-1929', in 'Slavic Review'. Vol.34, No.1, March, 1975, pp.65-85.
- Z. Jičínský - 'Sur la Federalisation de la Tschecoslovaquie', Orbis, Prague, 1969.
- O. Lewis - 'La Vida'. Panther, London, 1968.
- W. Petersen - in 'Readings in the Sociology of Migration'. ed. Jansen. Pergamon, Oxford, 1970.
- L. Rainwater - 'Behind Ghetto Walls : Black Families in a Federal Slum'. Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1971.
- R. Selucký - 'The Economic Equalisation of Slovakia with the Czech Lands' in 'East European Economics', No.4, (1965), pp.16-24.
- R.W. Seton-Watson - 'A History of the Czechs and Slovaks'. Hutchinson, London, 1943.
- J. Šindelka - 'Národnostní otázka a socialismus'. Svoboda, Prague, 1966.
- ed. V. Straka - 'Czechoslovakia Today'. Artia, Prague, 1964.
- G.S. Wheeler - 'The Human Face of Socialism : The Political Economy of Change in Czechoslovakia'. Lawrence Hill, New York, 1973.

CHAPTER FOUR

|   | <u>Page</u> |
|---|-------------|
| <u>THE ASSIMILATION POLICY IN ACTION (1958-1965)</u>  |             |
| CZECHOSLOVAKIAN GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION ... ..  | 163         |
| PERIODISATION ... ..  | 168         |
| DOCUMENTATION AND SAMPLE AREAS ... ..   | 168         |
| THE 1958 MEASURES ... ..  | 177         |
| Policy Aims (1958-1968) ... ..  | 177         |
| Law 74/1958, the Ministry Directives and the Nomads' Register. ... ..                             | 181         |
| The Administrative Apparatus ... ..   | 188         |
| Identifying the Nomads ... ..   | 189         |
| A Comparison of the 1927 and 1958 Legislation ...   | 193         |
| THE POLICY IN ACTION ... ..   | 197         |
| Settling the Nomadic Vlachs ... ..  | 197         |
| The Nomads' Register and Control of Population Movement ... ..                                    | 200         |
| Migration and the Labour Market ... ..  | 207         |
| Accommodation and the Dispersal of Population Concentrations ... ..                               | 216         |
| The Absence of Administrative Control ... ..  | 227         |
| THE OVERALL SITUATION IN THE EAST SLOVAKIA REGION AND SLOVAKIA FOLLOWING THE 1958 MEASURES ... .. | 230         |
| A PROPOSED SOLUTION : POPULATION TRANSFERS... ..  | 239         |
| AN ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS SINCE 1958 ... ..   | 245         |

CHAPTER FOURTHE ASSIMILATION POLICY IN ACTION (1958-1965).

Before plunging into the detailed operation of the assimilation policy it is best to pause briefly:

- (i) to outline the national and local government structure - the basic mechanism by which the plan was to be realised - and to locate it within the wider network of state and voluntary organisations. In addition to indicate the means by which the Communist Party exercises effective control over all manner of organised activity in the Republic.
- (ii) to give a table dividing the post-War years into separate periods as regards the development of official policy towards Gypsies both to help analysis of policy shifts and to serve as a useful reference aid.
- (iii) to discuss the kinds and quality of sources on which the following chapters are based, their inevitable drawbacks and the criteria used to choose specific areas for closer study.



CZECHOSLOVAKIAN GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION

The structure of national and local government in Czechoslovakia is not formally dissimilar to that in Britain, as is evident from the following chart.

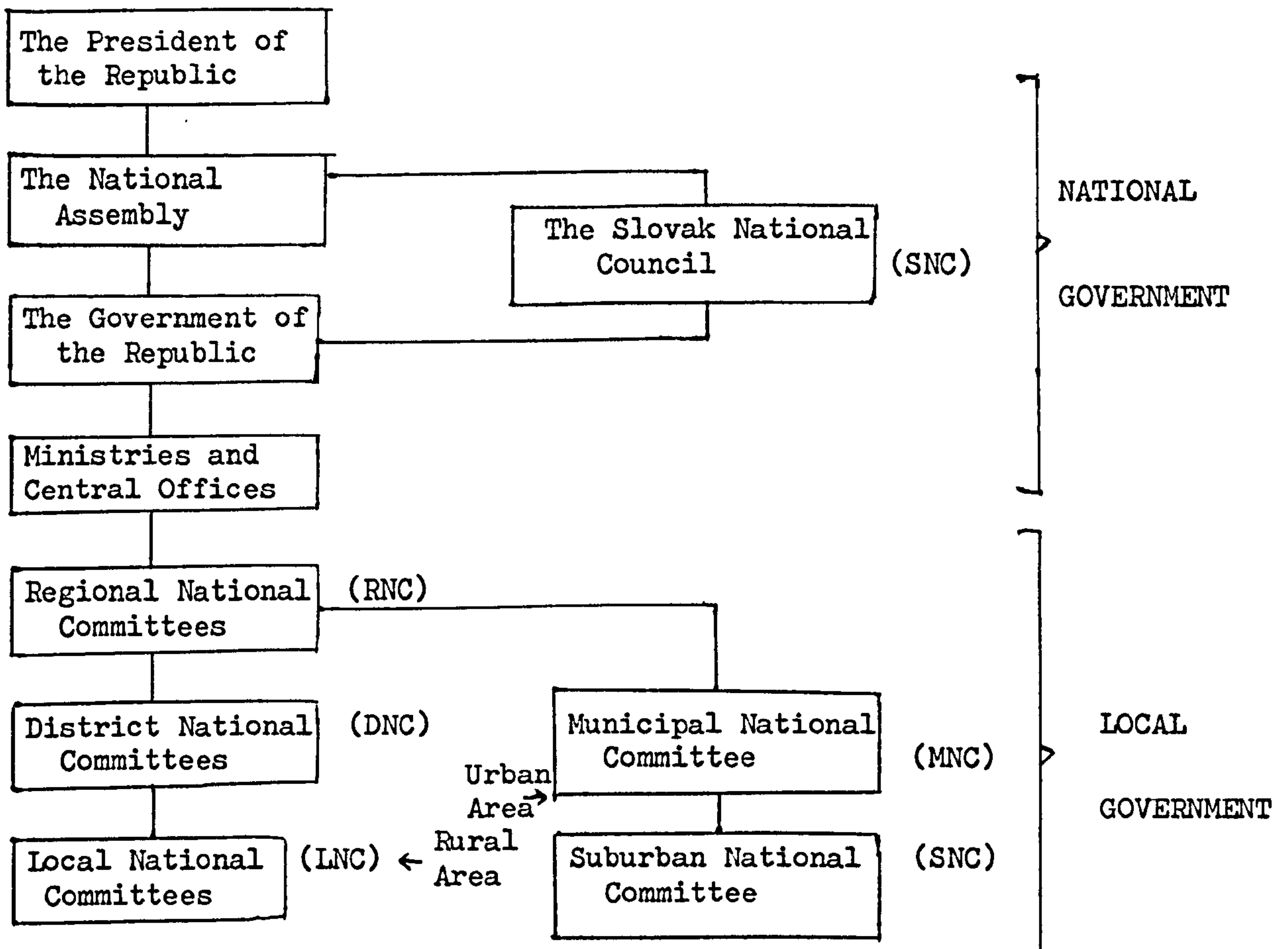
The president is elected for a five-year term by parliament (the National Assembly), the supreme organ of state power and the legislative body, whose members are elected by universal adult suffrage every four years. Although appointed and recalled by the president, the government is responsible to parliament and consists, in the main, of the heads of various ministries.

Before federalisation in 1968 there was a roughly parallel yet subordinate governmental structure in Slovakia where an elected parliament (Slovakian National Council) in turn elected its executive body (Praesidium) whose members (Commissioners) headed what amounted to Slovakian ministries (Commissions). However, since the writ of the National Assembly extended throughout the Republic, the position of the Slovakian National Council was somewhat analagous to that of Stormont in the United Kingdom and likewise its role in practice tended to be consultative and partisipatory rather than independent.

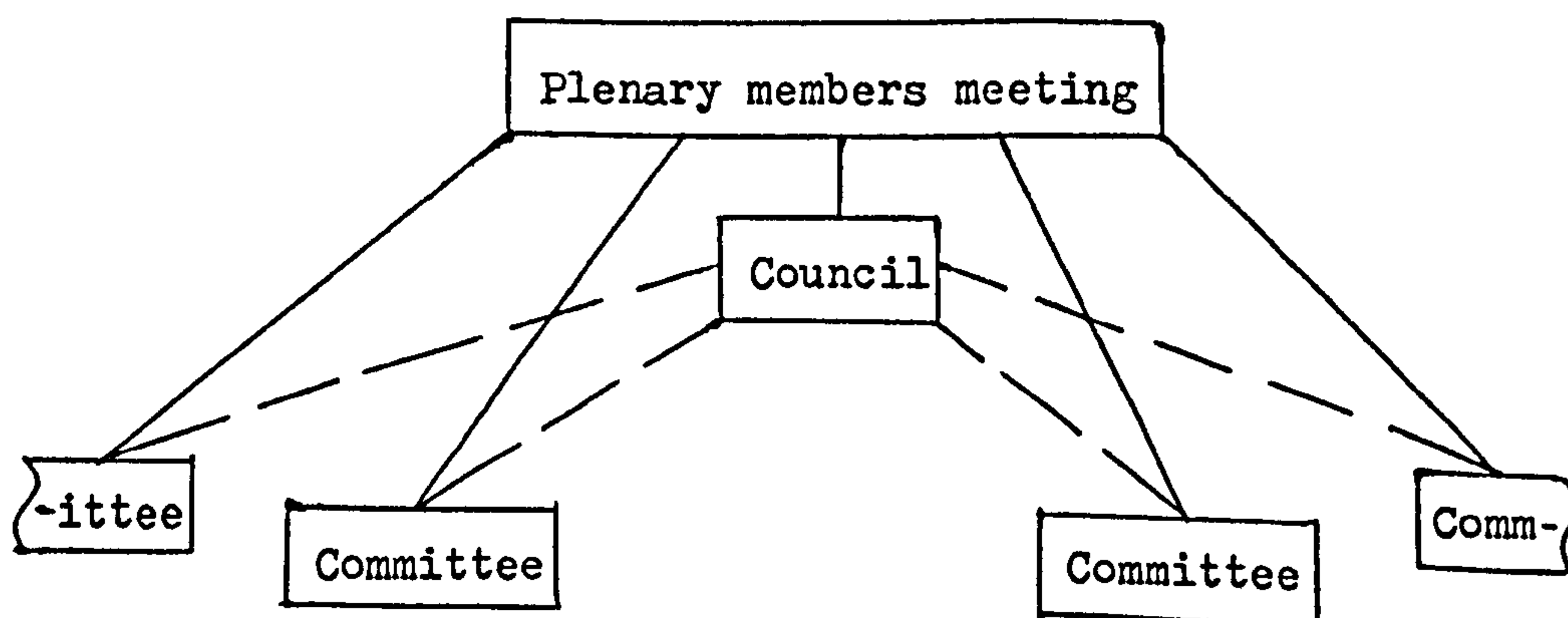
Local government is the task of National Committees at regional, district and local level. These committees have relatively broad powers for they are responsible for organising economic, cultural, health and social affairs as a whole within their respective areas as well as running a number of small firms themselves (such as small production plants, building enterprises, local transport etc).

The organs of government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic

(Handbook : 32,62)\*.

An organisational chart of a National Committee

(Handbook : 63)



— = direct control

- - = indirect control

\* All refs. for Chs. 4 to 6 at end of Ch. 6.

Their finances are provided in part from the national budget (24.1% of the national budget in 1964), but also in part from their own economic activities.

The supreme authority of a National Committee is its plenary meeting of all members, who have been elected in secret ballot by the public for a four-year term, but day-to-day management is the task of the Council which is elected by the plenary meeting and is responsible to it. The Council directs the work of a number of specialised committees (e.g. housing, health, etc.) composed partly of elected members and partly of co-opted experts.

Although primarily responsible to its plenary meeting, each Council "is guided by the principle of democratic centralism, which means that the Local National Committee is subordinated to the resolutions and decisions of the District National Committee, and this in turn, to the Regional National Committee". (Straka : 107). Likewise national committees are subject to governmental and ministerial control in the form of laws, decrees and policy directives which they must obey and furnish evidence of their compliance in periodic reports.

In addition to this direct check on their work, the activities of local authorities are subject to the scrutiny of a national network of Control Commissions. Central Commissions of Control and Statistics are elected bi-annually by the National Assembly and by the Slovakian National Council; regional, district and municipal commissions by delegate conference and local and suburban commissions by public meeting.



These commissions are concerned with putting right shortcomings in public life. They keep a check on statistical and other economic data, publicly criticise the deficiencies they meet with, pay attention to suggestions and criticisms from the public. Where regulations have been infringed they are authorised to use suitable educational means - advice, persuasion, public criticism - or to suggest that the appropriate authorities take action.

(Handbook : 62).

While the formally democratic structure of government in Western capitalist states might be said to mask the real economic and consequently political power wielded by business interests, the control of the machinery of government in Czechoslovakia and in other socialist-bloc countries by forces other than the mass of electors is stated quite openly in the principle of 'the leading role of the Party'. Although the 1948 Constitution made no mention of the Communist Party, article four of the 1960 Constitution stated:

The guiding force in society and in the State is the vanguard of the working class, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia ....

(Handbook : 25).

The Constitution did not make fully explicit the means by which the Party could exercise this role, although the inter-dependence of all organisations in Czechoslovakia and their subordination to the Party was affirmed in article six:

The National Front of Czechs and Slovaks, in which the people's organisations are associated, is the political expression of the alliance of the working people of town and country, led by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

(ibid.)

The National Front - an umbrella organisation comprising all political parties and all voluntary organisations such as the nation-

wide trade union movement, the youth movement, the Red Cross and also national minority cultural associations etc. - is intended to provide an overall framework during the transitory socialist phase when the state gradually withers away as full communism is approached.

Its chief aim is to complete the construction of socialism in Czechoslovakia (and as this process continues) some of the duties of state organs shall gradually be transferred to ...[member] organisations.

(Handbook : 35, 25).

All National Assembly and National Committee members are elected as National Front candidates but the Front itself has no executive powers of its own; its function is to co-ordinate. The Front has an organisational structure of central, regional, district and local committees and this structure is common to all Front members, including the Communist Party for which it was originally devised. Equally applicable to all members is the principle of 'democratic centralism':

...a term intended to denote that double process by which authority flowed upwards from party cells in town or factory or village through intermediate local or regional committees till it reached its apex in the central committee which was the organ of the sovereign congress, and discipline flowed downwards through the same channels, every party organ being subordinated to the organ above it and ultimately to the central committee.

(Carr : 197).

The rigidly hierarchical structure and the principle of democratic centralism have the effect that each separate level of a National Front member organisation faces in two directions for it is accountable both to its direct electors yet also to the level above it in the hierarchy. These features, together with the requirement that all organisations be full members or at least affiliated to the Front, give the Communist Party leadership its means of control for ultimately

every level of every organisation in the country is subordinated to the Party's Central Committee.

#### PERIODISATION

There is little disagreement among commentators on Gypsy policy in Czechoslovakia as to how the post-war years should be divided into separate periods - divisions being marked by major national legislation or decrees initiating new policy lines - but this does not imply similar characterisation of periods.

The periodisation of the following table is based on that of the 1975 study by the Czechoslovakian Academy of Sciences (Kára : 47), which, in turn, is an improved version of a table in an earlier draft of this thesis, supplied to the research team in 1973. Naturally there is a close correspondance between the table below and its Czechoslovakian equivalent which gives no hint of a serious difference in interpretation of the interrelationship of 1958 policy aims. However discussion of these is best postponed until a later stage - at the end of Chapter Six.

#### DOCUMENTATION AND SAMPLE AREAS.

Any historical study such as this, concentrating on the implementation of a nation-wide policy during more than a decade, must be heavily dependent on contemporary documents. Problems immediately arise about the reliability of such evidence, for the researcher is separated from the events he writes about, often by space and inevitably by time. The usual safeguard against error is



PERIOD OVERALL SUPERVISORY BODY POLICY AIMS BOUNDARY - MARKING LEGISLATION etc.

PRINCIPAL MEASURES EMPLOYED

|                  |  |   |  |  |
|------------------|--|---|--|--|
| 1. 1945<br>-1948 | Ministry of Education  | Equality of Gypsies with other citizens. (Formally in law).   | <u>Kosice Govt. Programme</u><br>(1945)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-General pledge against discrimination.</li> <li>-Right to work declared.</li> </ul>  |
| 2. 1948<br>-1958 | "  | Tackling of social and educational problems.  | Communists take full control (Feb.1948).   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Localised attempts at social and educational work.</li> <li>-First attempt to form special local authority committees for Gypsy affairs.</li> <li>-First research.</li> </ul>  |
| 3. 1958<br>-1965 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Local authorities (Depts.of Internal affairs).</li> <li>-Home Office.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Settlement of all Gypsies.</li> <li>-Socio-economic equalisation of all Gypsies with other citizens by means of complete assimilation.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-C.P.Central Committee Decree (1958)</li> <li>-Law 74/1958 plus Ministry Directives.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Banning of nomadism.</li> <li>-Control of Gypsy movement.</li> <li>-Register of nomads and semi-nomads (Feb.1959).</li> <li>-Local authority help to nomads in accommodation and work.</li> </ul>  |
| 4. 1965<br>-1968 | Govt.Committee for Questions of the Gypsy Population.  | "<br>(more systematically)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Govt.Decree 502/1965</li> <li>-Govt.Committee Directives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a)'Main directions in solving questions of the gypsy population'.</li> <li>b)'Principles for organising the transfer and dispersal of the gypsy population'.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Establishment of Govt.Committee, of local authority committees and of 'Plenipotentiaries for Questions of the Gypsy Population'.</li> <li>-Planned and co-ordinated solution of the 'Gypsy question'.</li> <li>-Provision of central govt. funds for local authorities.</li> </ul> |

| PERIOD | OVERALL SUPERVISORY BODY | POLICY AIMS | BOUNDARY - MARKING LEGISLATION etc. | PRINCIPAL MEASURES EMPLOYED |
|--------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|--------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|

|                 |   |  |  |   |
|-----------------|---|--|--|---|
| 4. 1965-1968    | Cont/...  |  | -Govt.Decree 159/167<br>Timetable for dispersal and transfer programme.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Controlled dispersal of Gypsy concentrations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a)By planned transfers from Slovakia to the Czech lands.</li> <li>b)By local dispersal.</li> </ul> </li> <li>-Prevention of 'unplanned' migration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a)By attempted amendment of Law 74/1958.</li> <li>b)By Govt.Committee directive.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                  |
| 5. 1969-(1970)- | Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs:<br>a)1970 in Czech lands.<br>b)1969 in Slovakia<br>(plus Govt.committee) | 'Social integration' (Czech lands).<br>'Acculturation' (Slovakia). | Govt.Decree 384/1968<br><u>Czech Govt.Decree 279/1970.</u><br><u>Slovak Govt.Decree 210/1971.</u><br>and <u>94/1972.</u><br><u>Federal Govt.Decree 231/1972.</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Dissolution of Govt.Committee</li> <li>-Transfer and dispersal policy abandoned. (lapsed in 1968 but only formally ended in 1970 (Czech lands) and in 1972 (Slovakia)).</li> <li>-Establishment of Gypsy-Rom Associations (1969) and their dissolution (1973).</li> <li>-Solution of the Gypsy problem on a social work basis.</li> <li>-Sociological research into Gypsy problem. (1972- ).</li> </ul> |

to take evidence from a number of different but apparently reliable sources in order to cross-check details from them against each other for consistency and plausibility. When the events in question are not too remote in time he may even seek out eye-witnesses to corroborate the accounts in documents.

In the case of this study two main sources of data are utilised - government and local government reports and documents as well as notes on field-work carried out in the areas examined in more detail. Unfortunately the official documents do not constitute as much of a variety of sources as could be desired and bearing in mind that their authors usually were officials responsible for the situations and events they described, it could be reasonably suspected that the accounts often intentionally distorted the real state of affairs. Also it could be argued, with some justification, that officials were often ignorant of the real state of affairs, being unwilling to leave the safety and comfort of their offices for the mud, disease and hostility of Gypsy settlements unless absolutely forced. In either case, official documents are 'prima facie' suspect.

To such objections the only answer is that these are the only documents which exist on the subject. Because this is virtually virgin territory very few studies have been made and even these draw on the same official sources (as Sus does for example). Ulč is forced to rely entirely on newspaper articles, but these in turn are largely based on official press releases. Official documents do give statistics, however, and it is possible to compare figures for different periods, accepting some as plausible and rejecting others as inconsistent with preceding or succeeding data. As for evaluations



it is often easy to detect a biased attitude and, knowing this, the direction in which the evaluation must be weighted is also known.

But on closer inspection official documents by no means display a solid unanimity of approach but rather a wide range of often strongly conflicting attitudes and interests at every level. There is the well-intentioned central government expounding the national interest, which differs considerably from what local authorities usually see as their particular interests. Consequently there is a sharp interchange of opinion about the value of specific laws and administrative measures, or even outbursts against the entire policy aims. There is the local government official, caught between the millstones of grass-roots prejudice and administrative pressure to get results, who must explain to his superiors why the plan has not been fulfilled. There is the local authority complaining to another for 'unloading' their Gypsies on his district. There is the enthusiastic secretary of the Committee for Gypsy Affairs who in his reports gives vent to his frustration in not being able to change anything because he is consistently blocked by his more powerful colleagues, content to preserve the 'status quo'. There is the shocked medical authority angrily reporting the contaminated water and ordure-polluted surroundings of Gypsy settlements, while the local authority does nothing to improve basic amenities.

In general the bluntness and frankness of official reports are surprising and because of inherent conflicts of interest, these documents can almost in effect be claimed as a variety of independent sources.

As for the accuracy of knowledge of document authors, this naturally varies a great deal. However, many local authorities, especially in Slovakia, appear to be extremely well informed as numerous case-histories testify. While it would be presumptuous to claim that a few months field-work justify an overall judgement of local government documents, nevertheless I did tend to encounter the sort of problems described in official reports and even if I did not always evaluate situations in the same way, the reports usually gave valuable insight rather than appearing the irrelevant imaginings of some remote official.

It should also be mentioned that some of the officials who helped draft the 1958 policy and contributed to the 1959 handbook had considerable personal experience of Gypsy settlements.

Another question entirely is availability of data. While major national documents were obtainable from a number of sources, this was not the case with regional and district level documents. Tracking down the right office was sometimes a major task and then, apart from difficulties of access, documents more than a few years old were not arranged in neat ordered folios with contents chronologically listed but instead, crammed into boxes and drawers and cupboards - an incredible jumble of papers, some important, some trivial. Many documents had undoubtedly been destroyed, although for no more sinister reason than that they occupied limited cupboard space. So, in the limited time available, it was possible only to sift through the mass, hoping that nothing important escaped attention.

There is an additional difficulty that comprehensive national reports and statistics were not compiled before the administrative

reorganisation of 1965 and therefore any picture of overall development during this initial period had to be constructed from sporadic regional and district reports, mainly from Slovakia. Such a limitation in official evidence placed added importance on the choice of areas to be studied in more detail. On what criteria should they have been chosen?

Apart from the above-mentioned availability and accessibility of data, two further criteria suggested themselves - migration rate and population concentration. The principal feature of post-War Gypsy development was the heavy migratory flow between the Gypsy settlements in under-developed Slovakia and the industrial regions of the Czech lands, whilst the aims of the 1958 policy were to check this voluntary movement and replace it by the planned dispersal of all Gypsies from their population concentrations, whether recently or long established. Consequently it was natural to choose a predominantly rural part of Slovakia and complement this with an urban centre in the Czech lands, both areas having a relatively large number and proportion of Gypsies as well as a high migration rate.

On this basis a choice was made in Slovakia of the East Slovakia Region and within this the Spišská Nová Ves district, including a pair of adjacent villages with sizeable Gypsy settlements for field study. The Czech area chosen was the North Moravia Region and within this the coal and steel town of Ostrava, especially the decayed urban core.

The attached map shows the 1967 Czechoslovakian Gypsy population by region and also the density in relation to the total population.



THE GYPSY POPULATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA (1967) (1967 Census : 33,34),

IN ABSOLUTE NUMBERS AND RELATIVE TO THE TOTAL POPULATION OF EACH

COUNTRY, REGION OR DISTRICT.

BOHEMIA MORAVIA SLOVAKIA

|  |  |   |  |  |   |  |   |   |  |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|---|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| West<br>Bohemia<br>Region<br>8,647<br>(1%) | North Bohemia Region<br>18,922<br>(1.7%) |   | East<br>Bohemia<br>Region<br>5,279<br>(0.4%) | North<br>Moravia<br>Region<br>10,788<br>(0.6%) |   | West<br>Slovakia<br>Region<br>41,498<br>(2.2%) | Central<br>Slovakia<br>Region<br>33,331<br>(2.4%) | East Slovakia<br>Region<br>89,697<br>(7.4%) |  |  |  |
|  | Prague<br>3,170<br>(0.3%)                | Central<br>Bohemia<br>Region<br>5,925<br>(0.5%) |  | <div>Ostrava<br/>2,696<br/>(1%)</div>          |   |  |   |   |  |  |  |
|  | South Bohemia Region<br>2,581<br>(0.4 %) |   | South Moravia<br>Region<br>4,155<br>(0.2%)   |  | <div>Spisska<br/>Nova Ves<br/>10,249<br/>(8.3%)</div> |  |   |   |  |  |  |
|  |  |   |  |  |   |  |   |   |  |  |  |

CZECHOSLOVAKIA - 223,993 (1.6%)

CZECH LANDS - 59,467 (0.6%)

SLOVAKIA - 164,526 (3.7%)

Most striking is the fact that a massive 40% of all Czechoslovakian Gypsies live in the East Slovakia Region, over double the number living in any other region. Within the region each of the nine districts has several thousand Gypsy inhabitants, Spišská Nová Ves being fourth both in absolute numbers and relative density. Unfortunately statistics for the region as a whole are lacking between 1968 and 1971 when, for a brief period, regions were abolished as an administrative unit throughout Slovakia.

Although the North Moravia Region is second in absolute Gypsy population and third relatively among the Czech regions, the city of Ostrava has the second largest Gypsy population of all districts in the Czech lands. Regrettably, however, official documentation was slighter, less reliable and less accessible than had been hoped at the start of the study. Ostrava in particular occasionally failed to reply to central government requests for information, apparently in protest against the whole policy.

Since virtually all Gypsies in the Czech lands are either post-war migrants from Slovakia or children of such migrants, any area with a significant Gypsy population must have experienced heavy in-migration. Out-migration data from Slovakia was hard to obtain but a 1970 study (Davidová : 154,157) showed that of Gypsies resident in Ostrava in 1969, 40% were born in the East Slovakia Region and of these East Slovakia Gypsies in Ostrava, 35% came from the district of Spišská Nová Ves. In the main village studied in this district there was scarcely an adult Gypsy who had not migrated, at some time or another, to the Czech lands.

The areas chosen are not typical, for what areas could be, but they are important in that they have large numbers of Gypsies and are closely linked by migration to and fro between Slovakia and the Czech lands.

### THE 1958 MEASURES.

#### Policy Aims (1958-1968).

In 1958 the 'gypsy question' was seen essentially as a problem of the socio-economic inequality of Gypsies with other citizens to be solved by means of the Gypsies' total assimilation. This was to be achieved by integrating them into the labour force while at the same time dispersing their population concentrations.\* In the policy makers' view this course alone offered hope of a final solution to the perennial problem of Gypsies, was in harmony with Marxist-Leninist principles and - on a more practical level - suited the political requirements for an ethnically homogeneous population.

It might seem unnecessary to repeat these basic points, already stated in the previous chapter, but some commentators - such as Ulč - failed to recognise the central role of employment and dispersal in

---

\* This is why most emphasis is given here to themes such as employment, accommodation, population movement, dispersal and administrative control at the expense of health, education and crime. However another reason for the relatively sketchy treatment of these last three themes, apart from lack of space, is that local data tends to be limited and, in any case, effectively summarised by national surveys. As regards crime statistics little can be concluded except that the crime rate for Gypsies was considerably higher than for non-Gypsies - both for crimes of violence and property offences.



the 1958 measures and consequently regarded these policy aims as innovations of the 1965 measures.\* Likewise the deceptive formulation of Law 74 might lead to a mistaken belief that the 1958 measures were directed at only a small part of the Gypsy population - the 'nomads' - rather than at the minority in its entirety.

The 1959 local authority manual gave first priority to the task of ensuring that every adult Gypsy worked on a regular basis, whether classified as a nomad or not.

Above all the problem of drawing gypsy citizens into permanent employment must be solved. This is not just a matter of providing for the nomadic or semi-nomadic gypsies covered by law [74], but in fact means all gypsies - and therefore settled gypsies too - who are as yet unemployed.

(Manual (5) : 9\*\*, emphasis in original).

Apart from considerations that employed Gypsies' new income would be the basis of a higher standard of living and that regular work would play an important educative role, the wider issue was stressed by the manual that the economy was suffering as a result of such wasted productive potential.

Heavy losses to the national economy, amounting to tens of millions of crown annually, are caused by this labour reserve of tens of thousands of predominantly young gypsies who either do not work at all, or else whose work output is very low. This is proved by the case of the Košice region [in East Slovakia] where a survey of six districts revealed

- 
- \* <sup>v</sup>Ulc's error is discussed more fully at the beginning of the next chapter.
  - \*\* National and local government documents are identified by numbers in the text and listed in full in Appendix 'B' at the end of Chapter Six.

that of 13,205 adult gypsies, only 2,917 are in regular work. Of these, 55% are employed as auxiliary building workers, a further significant proportion in agriculture and of them all probably a maximum of 10% possess some work qualification.

(ibid. : 7,8)

Likewise the crucial importance of maximum dispersal was reiterated throughout the manual. In allocating accommodation local authorities were instructed that they:

must observe the principle of dispersing.... [gypsies] as much as possible amongst other inhabitants. As a matter of principle it is necessary to end the further concentration of gypsies in separate houses occupied by gypsies alone, in gypsy streets, town quarters or rural settlements. This way of living together causes backward, uncultural and unhygienic forms of life to be preserved and considerably hinders the penetration of the re-educating influence of the other inhabitants....Re-education will be possible above all in circumstances where nomadic persons or their families will not live in larger groups but dispersed among other citizens.

(5:12). (Emphasis in original).

However the concept of dispersal was not limited to the breaking-up of Gypsy population concentrations; it extended to every aspect of daily life: work, leisure and political activity.

At work:

the best results in re-educating gypsies have been achieved in precisely those workplaces where they have never been employed in whole groups but individually among other workers....Naturally the rule is that they should be dispersed as much as possible.

(5:9,10)

Also in leisure, musical groups composed entirely of Gypsies were found:

lacking in education, organisational and methodical leadership... [and in] discipline....The best results so far are where young gypsies are included in a group with other young people. In such groups young gypsies very quickly adapt and become effective members.

(5:19).

In future it will be more suitable not to form separate gypsy groups but to include talented gypsies in our musical, dance or choral groups.

(5:43).

After criticising the practice in the pre-war republic where local government officers dealt with Gypsy spokesmen, since these leaders were unrepresentative of the broad mass of Gypsies, the handbook remarked that in political organisation contemporary "meetings composed entirely of gypsies were unsatisfactory for similar reasons. Only such meetings where we discuss and work together are successful". (5:37). The fate of a proposed all-Gypsy petition for their own magazine and folk group was mentioned in the previous chapter; indeed any attempts by young Gypsies to organise themselves were to be suppressed.

There have developed completely incorrect tendencies among Gypsies to form independent groups and organisations in the settlements....These tendencies must be resisted and...an opposite [tendency] strengthened for young gypsies to establish...friendly relations with other young people in youth organisations.

(7:19).

Dispersal, then, was a general principle to be applied wherever possible. "In all work among gypsies it is necessary to observe the principle that every form of concentrating gypsies hinders the process of their re-education" (5:43). To ask Gypsies their opinion of this principle was considered inappropriate, for any reluctance to be dispersed presumably would have been considered



as one of those features of 'the backward way of life' which the 1958 measures were intended to eliminate. It was stated authoritatively on behalf of most Gypsies that:

they want to live like other people and are grateful if we help them to achieve this. This is demonstrated by the fact that the dispersal of gypsies and patient work among them bring positive results.

(5:12)

The third main policy aim of 1958 was to prevent voluntary population movement: 'natural migration' as it came to be termed. This was seen as an aim not only in its own right but as a pre-condition for the success of the others, for if large numbers of Gypsies continued to migrate back and forth between their home settlements and the new urban concentrations there could be little hope of integrating them into the work force on any permanent basis or dispersing them amongst other citizens.

But there was another important difference; while the first two aims could have been achieved within the existing legislative framework, this third required new legislation to limit the freedom of movement of a specific section of Czechoslovakian society - albeit 'in their best interests.'

Law 74/1958, the Ministry Directives and the Nomads' Register.

Ostensibly the aim of Law 74 was to bring to an end at last the immemorial nomadism with horse and cart that had persisted amongst Gypsies since the time of their first arrival on Slovakian territory in the early fourteenth century. More importantly it was also directed against the post-war migratory flow of Gypsies between their settlements in Slovakia and the Czech lands that had been

officially characterised as a disturbing modern recrudescence of the more traditional nomadism. As such the law was intended to give total control over voluntary Gypsy population movement and it still remains in force today.

Law 74 itself simply stated the responsibility of local authorities to provide nomads with permanent accommodation and regular employment, while threatening ungrateful recipients of such generosity with up to three years imprisonment.

Law 74/1958 Sb. on the permanent settlement of nomads.<sup>(3)</sup>

1. Local authorities shall provide comprehensive assistance to persons who lead a nomadic way of life to enable them to adopt a settled way of life; in particular they are obliged to help such persons in finding suitable employment and accommodation and by educational means to aim at making them orderly working citizens.
2. A nomadic life is led by someone who, whether in a group or individually, wanders from place to place and avoids honest work or makes his living in some disreputable way, even though he might be registered as a permanent resident in some place.
3. Whoever should continue in a nomadic way of life, in spite of having been offered help to settle permanently, will be punished for the offence by six months to three years deprivation of freedom.

Although the law was the nucleus of the 1958 measures, their full extent can better be gauged from the associated ministry directives that were published together with the law in the manual for local authorities:

The directive of the Ministry of the Interior listed the additional but key task of making the register of nomads. On a day

chosen by the Ministry, officials of Local National Committees (LNCs), assisted by the police, were to "acquaint nomadic persons with the content of the law and explain to them that the measures adopted were aimed at improving their standard of living".\* (5:67). Then a detailed register was to be made of all nomads. A separate 'register document' was to be prepared for each family, containing photographs of all members over fifteen years old and details copied from documents such as identity cards, birth certificates, certificates of state citizenship, military service records etc. In the identity cards of nomads was to be stamped: "Included in the register at...LNC in...district on the date..." (5:67). Should nomads over fifteen years old not possess identity cards they were to be given a document confirming their presence in the register and identified with their fingerprints.

Some difficulty was anticipated in establishing the identity of nomads and in a remarkable slip the E. Slovakia RNC warned that "during the registration it must be expected that persons will supply false information and gypsy..." (15). ('To gypsy' is the normal colloquial verb in Slovak for 'to tell lies'). Presumably as a deterrent to evasion, nomads were forbidden to move during the period of investigation meanwhile paying their own living expenses.

---

\* In a parallel directive to its subordinate NCs the East Slovakia RNC thoughtfully added:

It must be expected that people will be reluctant [to register; consequently it is] not recommended that the campaign be 'popularised' too much by local radio or the town-crier. (15).



An overall plan of settlement was to be drawn up by local authorities, based on available opportunities for employment and accommodation and observing the principle of maximum dispersal. In principle the place where nomads were included in the register was to be their permanent residence (15) but this could be arranged in negotiations between local authorities. Apparently the nomads themselves were to have some say in the matter for "where they refuse the proposed place of permanent residence or employment" (5:66), a solution was to be sought at district or even regional level. Transfer of nomads between regions was even envisaged, although only "in exceptional cases". In general the local authorities "do not expect the 'export' or 'import' of nomadic persons" (15).

The register documents were to be held by the appropriate LNC mainly to assist in following the nomads' work, educational and health progress but rather than using sanctions against nomads, officials were advised to "patiently explain to them occasional shortcomings and their consequences". (5:69).

Because of the overall importance given to accommodation and employment in the assimilation programme, special attention was paid to these aspects. Should nomads cancel their permanent residence (deregister) with an LNC, their register documents were to be forwarded to the LNC of their declared destination. Should they later fail to register for permanent residence there, these documents could then be used in tracing them.

Although there was no outright prevention of nomads' movement by means of local government residential registration procedures, effective control was attempted in another way. When applying for

a job in Czechoslovakia, a prospective employee must first have been released from his previous employment. Formerly firms would only agree to release someone when a replacement had been found. Until he had his previous employer's stamp in his identity card together with a confirmation of his release, an applicant could not officially be re-employed.

Local authorities were to check that nomads were not re-employed without such a confirmation but more importantly to control that employers should release nomads "only after the previous agreement of the authority's departments of employment, health and social welfare". (5:70). In effect this meant that if nomads tried to move without the permission of the LNC where they were registered as permanently resident, they would not receive the certificate of release and therefore, in theory, could not be employed elsewhere. This would make them liable to accusations of 'making their living in some dishonest way' and thereby the sanctions of Law 74.

Unlike the directive of the Ministry of the Interior and indeed the law itself which spoke only of nomads, the directive of the Ministry of Education and Culture referred specifically to Gypsy children. The problem in this area was then, as now, a vicious spiral. When starting school at the age of six, Gypsy children were often partially or totally ignorant of the teaching language (Czech, Slovak or Hungarian) and this was an important factor in their poor school performance, as was their erratic attendance. In their compulsory nine years of education they rarely reached the highest grade and equally rarely achieved full literacy. Therefore they were ineligible for apprenticeships and either remained

a job in Czechoslovakia, a prospective employee must first have been released from his previous employment. Formerly firms would only agree to release someone when a replacement had been found. Until he had his previous employer's stamp in his identity card together with a confirmation of his release, an applicant could not officially be re-employed.

Local authorities were to check that nomads were not re-employed without such a confirmation but more importantly to control that employers should release nomads "only after the previous agreement of the authority's departments of employment, health and social welfare". (5:70). In effect this meant that if nomads tried to move without the permission of the LNC where they were registered as permanently resident, they would not receive the certificate of release and therefore, in theory, could not be employed elsewhere. This would make them liable to accusations of 'making their living in some dishonest way' and thereby the sanctions of Law 74.

Unlike the directive of the Ministry of the Interior and indeed the law itself which spoke only of nomads, the directive of the Ministry of Education and Culture referred specifically to Gypsy children. The problem in this area was then, as now, a vicious spiral. When starting school at the age of six, Gypsy children were often partially or totally ignorant of the teaching language (Czech, Slovak or Hungarian) and this was an important factor in their poor school performance, as was their erratic attendance. In their compulsory nine years of education they rarely reached the highest grade and equally rarely achieved full literacy. Therefore they were ineligible for apprenticeships and either remained



unemployed or else took unskilled jobs with no opportunity or incentive to improve their work qualifications. Early marriage in mid- or late teens led to the birth of new children who repeated the same depressing cycle as their parents.

The directive attempted to break into this circle at several places starting with pre-school age children, who were to be enrolled in nursery schools wherever possible, and similarly school-age gypsy children were to attend the supervised groups after school hours, created to help working mothers. As there was a shortage of places in these institutions the waiving of the usual requirement that the mothers should be employed, was preferential treatment for Gypsies. Attendance was voluntary and Gypsy parents were expected to pay for meals provided at the usual rate of up to 4 crowns daily, although low-income families pay nothing.

An effort was also to be made to improve school attendance but the statutory enforcement system of warnings followed by fines, with the ultimate sanction of putting children under the protection of the court, was not amended for Gypsies. Where Gypsy children over eight years old had not sufficient knowledge and skills to be included in their age-appropriate class, they were to be put in special classes or even schools. These special measures were only a means of giving concentrated instruction for a temporary period and the children were to be re-integrated into normal schools and classes as soon as possible. The practice of some local authorities of putting educationally backward Gypsy children into schools for the mentally sub-normal was strongly criticised.

In placing Gypsy school-leavers, local authorities were asked to bear in mind "the need to raise the cultural and economic level of gypsy families" (5:73), which meant enrolling Gypsies for apprenticeships even where they fell short of the entrance requirements.

No extra funds were to be available however. "The establishment of these schools or classes may not lead to demands for an increased work-plan and budget in 1958". (5:74).

Problems of adult illiteracy and poor work qualifications were to be dealt with either by courses run by employers during working hours or by voluntary courses in communities.

The health situation was also grave and the Ministry of Health directive stressed the importance of initially gaining and keeping accurate medical records of individual families and also evidence of the conditions where they lived - houses, streets and settlements.

All former nomads were to have a medical check-up with special attention paid to infectious diseases such as trachoma and tuberculosis, parasitic, skin and sexual diseases. In addition all legally required inoculation was to be carried out. Acute TB cases were to be hospitalised and where persuasion failed, legal sanctions were to be used. Similarly young children were to be hospitalised for a time where necessary.

It was also to be determined whether the planned accommodation for nomads was hygienically adequate, particularly in respect of toilets and drinking water. An inspection was to be made of existing Gypsy settlements and where necessary new wells were to be dug.

Unless special equipment was needed, this was to be financed from "Campaign Z", a fund to assist citizens' self-help campaigns to beautify town and countryside.

Lectures, film-shows and personal visits were planned to persuade Gypsies of the importance of hygiene and how it could be achieved.

Throughout, great care was to be taken "to guard against everything, which could arouse among...[nomads] the impression of discrimination. Particularly mass campaigns may not be undertaken which are only directed at the gypsy population and announced as such", (5:77). Likewise "the delousing of adults must be done as a rule in such a way that their typical customs are not infringed upon (for example it is not permitted to demand gypsies to crop their hair" (5:78). Doctors were recommended to commence the series of compulsory inoculations with those "which do not hurt and which do not cause a reaction". (5:79).

#### The Administrative Apparatus.

The basic administrative apparatus to administer the 'gypsy question' had already been outlined in the 1958 party decree (2). Permanent committees were established at regional, district and local NCs, usually attached to the education department, and were manned by local authority employees plus volunteers from social organisations such as lawyers, doctors, teachers, trade unionists, youth leaders and "aware gypsy citizens". (5:21).



Their purpose was to co-ordinate the settling process, including educational courses, but in particular to follow carefully the progress of persons included on the nomads' register. Where there were large numbers of Gypsies a local government worker was to be appointed to work full-time on Gypsy questions.

No central government funds were to be made available and local authorities were advised that the major expense of providing accommodation was their own responsibility.

As for supplying accommodation, on occasions even by new building, it is necessary to bear in mind that this is not just a matter of financial resources but of planning and the question will have to be solved within the general solution of the housing problem. (5:62).

An attempt was made to establish a national co-ordinating body - the 'Central Committee for Work with Citizens of Gypsy Origin' - at the Ministry of Education and Culture, but in spite of its impressive title this committee exercised little effective control and was eventually dissolved in 1962 following a CP Central Committee suggestion that it should be replaced by a government committee. Such a body was eventually appointed - but not until October 1965.

#### Identifying the Nomads.

The term 'gypsy' did not appear in the wording of Law 74 nor throughout the directive of the Ministry of the Interior. Other ministries were less discreet however. The Ministry of Education and Culture headed its directive - "Re: The education and instruction of gypsy children", (5:73) while the Ministry of Health frankly admitted the identity of nomads and Gypsies in the first paragraph of its directive.

At present it is a matter of persons living until now a nomadic or semi-nomadic life and of persons who, although they are settled, have a low standard of living. This concerns mainly gypsies. (5:76).

This caution in formulation had the immediate aim of forestalling charges of ethnic discrimination for the measures were nominally directed against a social group, 'nomads', which included others as well as Gypsies. Later, in 1965, when there was a need to tighten up central control of the policy the new measures, aimed specifically at Gypsies, were enacted not by law as in 1958 but by the less public method of governmental and ministerial decree for the same reason.

The fact that to this day not a single law in Czechoslovakia refers to Gypsies by name, so that in law they do not exist, is also a reflection of the official view of their collective future. Since complete absorption was to be their destiny, an important first step was the denial to them of any legally valid separate identity.

Although such reticence avoided overt discrimination it had the concomitant disadvantage of imprecision for it was unclear from the law itself that Gypsies were its main object and in particular which Gypsies were to be regarded as nomads. It was to aid local authorities in their task of identifying nomads that the 1959 manual repeated the classification of Gypsies, first given in the 1958 Party decree. (See Chapter Three). There, Gypsies were divided into three categories - settled, semi-nomadic (or semi-settled), and nomadic - "according to their way of life at present" (5:7). This classificatory system remained in force until the late 1960's.

According to the manual (5:7) -

settled gypsies are those with regular employment and a permanent residence who have attained the cultural level of other people....They live dispersed among other inhabitants and will not require our care.

But there was also an important sub-group of settled Gypsies which gave cause for concern even though allegedly non-nomadic.

It is necessary to distinguish this group from gypsies who, although settled, live together in separate settlements, urban quarters or streets and usually have a low cultural level. They require our concentrated attention to be devoted to them.

The strongest group numerically...[is] that of semi-settled gypsies, who often change their workplace and residence....The majority are illiterate or semi-literate and live on a very low cultural level.

[Finally] nomadic (wandering) gypsies are a burning question. Most of these gypsies wander from place to place....They live on the lowest cultural level and the majority are illiterate. Against them are made the most complaints".

This classification was intended to clarify the concept of nomadism; its effect was to confuse it still further. The absurdity of regarding the post-war migration of 'semi-settled' Gypsies as a re-emergence of traditional nomadic patterns has already been established but at least 'a nomadic life', as defined by paragraph two of Law 74, necessarily involved physical movement by 'someone who...wanders from place to place'. According to the classification in the manual, however, the law was intended to apply not only to the 'nomadic' and 'semi-settled gypsies' but also to the sub-group of 'settled gypsies who...live together in separate settlements, urban quarters or streets and usually have a low cultural level'. In other words there were said to be large numbers of non-mobile 'nomads'.



In similar vein the directive of the Ministry of the Interior stated that "amongst nomadic and semi-nomadic persons cannot be included persons who, although formerly nomads, now do not differ significantly in their way of life from other workers (5:65), implying that if settled, yet still differing in their way of life, former 'nomads' could be included in the register. A parallel directive issued by the East Slovakia RNC made this point quite explicit, instructing local authorities that:

It is necessary to judge individually - not by the length of settlement but by the results achieved... (at work, at home, in the children's school attendance etc.). If good results have been attained this means that these persons cannot have had the conceptual characteristic and punishable offence of nomadism for some time...and should not be included in the register. (15).

(My emphasis)

Here the fact of whether physical movement had occurred or not was almost irrelevant, for the presence or absence of the almost metaphysical 'conceptual characteristic of nomadism' was to be inferred from the actual way of life at the time of inspection.

Tortured arguments and apparent contradictions in terms stemmed from the legal use of 'nomad' as an unsatisfactory circumlocation for 'gypsy'. For the real aim of the 1958 measures was not simply to restrict the movements of genuine nomads and migrants, it was to assimilate the entire Gypsy population and for this reason the only group excluded 'en masse' from the measures was that section of settled Gypsies who were regarded as almost assimilated.

Yet the government shrank from directing local authorities to include in the register all the remaining Gypsies who either lived in Gypsy concentrations or whose way of life was unacceptable,

perhaps because of the massive costs and labour involved. Instead the measures were to serve as a framework which could be used selectively as each local authority thought fit. Likewise the directive of the East Slovakia RNC advised:

It is impossible to give an automatic rule to determine who should or should not be included in the register. This must be the decision of local national committees (LNCs). (15)

This particular regional directive, which was applicable to over a third of the Republic's Gypsies, exemplified the contradictions inherent in the formulation of the 1958 measures. After having instructed local authorities to detect 'the conceptual characteristic and punishable offence of nomadism' in Gypsy families by a general evaluation of their way of life, irrespective of whether they had ever migrated, it concluded with the enigmatic warning: "We are out to catch nomadism, not gypsies". (ibid). The consequent confusion among local authority officials can be imagined.

#### A Comparison of the 1927 and 1958 Legislation

Comparative evaluation of the two laws banning nomadism differed widely and predictably corresponded to the commentators' political positions.

Although Ulč<sup>v</sup> did not refer specifically to the 1927 law, he attacked the policies of "the people's democratic era where the survival of ...[Gypsies'] identity was put at stake", contrasting them with "the live-and-let-live policy of the pre-war capitalist republic". (Ulč<sup>v</sup> : 429).

Sus, on the other hand, argued that "between the 1927 law and law 74/1958...there is a basic difference. The 1927 law is aimed in a hostile and racist way against all gypsies and in fact legalises their persecution, while in contrast the 1958 law arises from help to all nomadic persons" (Sus : 101).

Formally both laws had striking similarities. For example, neither law covered all Gypsies and neither applied to Gypsies alone. Paragraph one of Law 117/1927 specified that "by wandering gypsies, for the purposes of this law, is understood gypsies wandering from place to place and other work-shy wanderers who live in gypsy style... even if they should have a permanent residence for part of the year".(1). Both laws have an equal claim to be regarded as against nomadism rather than against Gypsies as such.

In both cases a register of nomads was compiled and those so listed were required to carry identity cards showing this fact. There was not, however, an outright ban on future movement for this could occasionally be authorised by local authorities.

Following 1958 this was only likely to be when there was a specific approved job and accommodation available elsewhere for the nomad but paragraph five of Law 117 mentioned a 'nomads' pass' to enable certain Gypsy families to continue travelling as before with their horses and carts. Although apparently more tolerant, Law 117 was deceptive in this for although no registered nomad could travel without such a pass, possession in no way guaranteed his right to travel. In addition to a list of persons, vehicles and animals for which the pass was valid, local authorities could also "specify in the interest of public safety the direction and type of journey". (1: 55(3)). The pass was issued at the discretion of local authorities



("no-one has a claim to it") and they could "withdraw or alter it at any time" (1:§5(4)), without any possibility of appeal by the nomad.

But if issue of the nomads' pass conferred no real right to travel, nor did it give any clear right to remain anywhere, for this too was a matter for the discretion of local authorities. These even had the power of "specifying territory and communities, to which the entry of nomadic gypsies is completely forbidden if they do not belong there". This ban was displayed "on roadside signs at the boundaries of such a territory or community". (1:§10).

Infringements of the law were to be punished by a month's imprisonment, except in the case of carrying arms for which the penalty was three months, and in addition nomads travelling without a pass were to have their vehicles and animals sold by public auction. Although the proceeds were to be returned to the nomads, most probably the sale price would be insufficient to provide alternative accommodation. Yet this problem and that of finding a new livelihood was left to the nomad to solve by himself.

It was in this point that the laws were fundamentally different and although both Ulc's and Sus' assessments were somewhat overstated, it is the latter who came nearer the truth. For although both laws, in certain hands, could be repressive, Law 74/1958 at least guaranteed the nomad and his family the right to be registered as resident in some place and imposed the duty on local authorities to find them regular work and adequate accommodation. Law 117/1927 gave nomads no rights whatsoever and likewise specified no duties of local authorities.

As has already been shown in Chapter Two, the 1927 legislation was quite typical of the discriminatory measures of late nineteenth and twentieth century governments in capitalist western Europe, where the long-term aim was to eradicate nomadic Gypsies by harrassing them from the roads. Far from 'live-and-let-live' such a policy had usually involved the toleration and even the encouragement of racialist attacks on Gypsies, especially in times of economic depression when they served as a convenient scapegoat.

It is true that the 1958 measures shared with their 1927 predecessor the hope of ridding society of an irritatingly visible social problem by the eventual assimilation of the Gypsies and with this end in view 'Gypsy' was defined in both periods as a social rather than an ethnic category. However, among the various motives prompting the 1958 policy was a genuine desire to benefit Gypsies by promoting their socio-economic equalisation which had no counterpart in the cynical disregard of the 1927 legislators. And, in spite of the shortcomings of the 1958 measures, it is inconceivable that any Gypsies should have preferred to return to their desperate plight in 1927 when, in the pogroms and legalised persecution, the spectre of their impending mass extermination was already plainly visible.

The real problem was not to choose between 1927 and 1958, but to determine which of the alternative socialist policies - assimilationist or pluralist - would be more just and effective in furthering the best interests of the Gypsies themselves and of the Republic. It was this debate which had been cut short so abruptly in 1958 and which was to revive once more in 1968. Understandably no Gypsy opponent of the 1958 measures or any of their supporters ever

advocated a return to the days of 'live-and-let-live', for this was a myth founded on the ignorance of bourgeois apologists; instead they challenged the assimilationist denial of the Gypsies' right to their ethnicity, branding it as a Stalinist distortion of socialism, and condemned the special measures to control Gypsies' movement and ensure their dispersal as illegal. Whilst condemning the 1958 measures as a travesty of a socialist solution, these critics nevertheless agreed in principle with the Czechoslovakian government's claim that:

Whereas capitalist states solved and still solve the gypsy question by the sharpest racial discrimination and isolation, in countries of the socialist camp we approach the solution of this problem from principles of socialist humanism. In this way it is demonstrated in practice that the gypsy question can be completely solved only by a socialist society, based on the absolute equality of rights of all people, on the mutual respect of human being for human being. Moreover in the solution of these problems can be seen the clear superiority of the socialist system over the capitalist.

(5:6).

## THE POLICY IN ACTION

### Settling the Nomadic Vlachs

- In altruistic phrases the government manual had called for "the mutual rapprochement of gypsies and other people" (5:32), emphasising that "the basic and key condition in solving the gypsy question will be the formation of a correct new attitude of the whole population towards gypsies". (5:59). In contrast, official reports of local



authorities - so much closer to their political grass-roots - often expressed the narrow, self-interested view that the main benefit of the 1958 measures was that they provided new and more effective means of forcing recalcitrant Gypsies to behave. An East Slovakia RNC report of 1958 gave some idea of the strength of such local feeling.

This contemporary situation is intolerable not only for nomadic and semi-nomadic persons themselves but also with regard to other people who, alarmed and threatened by nomadic and semi-nomadic groups, as honest citizens of our republic have complained and demanded that this state of affairs be set right. Administrative measures up till now, aimed at re-educating nomadic and semi-nomadic persons, have not led to a significant change and for this reason it was necessary to introduce a specific law to ban the nomadic way of life. This will create the necessary preconditions for employing nomadic and semi-nomadic persons and for exercising the required educating and coercive influence, mainly by local authorities. (16).

It was the sub-ethnic group of nomadic Vlachs that probably aroused greatest hostility amongst the non-Gypsy population. They still made a living in the manner of their forefathers - horse-dealing, knife-grinding, fortune-telling and petty theft - and the most instantly successful part of the 1958 campaign was in preventing this small yet emotively significant group of true nomads from continuing their travels, bringing to an end in five brief days a traditional way of life that had survived in Czechoslovakia for as many centuries. To immobilise the nomads was simple enough; the wheels were ripped from their carts and wagons and their horses confiscated. Sometimes they were given money for their draught animals but in many cases these were slaughtered without compensation.

Local accounts did not record the nomads' misery at what must have been a sudden and catastrophic loss but they did give occasional glimpses of the resilience of a people, long accustomed to harsh and arbitrary castigation. With a final flourish some nomads managed to pull off yet another trick, nimbly outwitting the plodding officials in charge of settling them. One such cautionary tale was printed as a lesson to other local authorities.

"What do the comrades from Nitra [in West Slovakia] have to report?" asked the manual. (5). Nitra reported as follows:

In trying to settle nomads we came up against the problem of horses. Horses enable gypsies to move easily from place to place, so we bought their horses.

Soon afterwards, however, the Gypsies used this money to buy new horses from agricultural co-operatives. As a result of increased mechanisation these co-ops had a surplus of horses and were selling them off cheaply.

We learnt a lesson from this.

(5:11,12).

Provision of accommodation for these newly immobilised Vlachs varied enormously. For some it was nothing more than their now wheel-less wagons; others were moved by well-intentioned officials into modern flats. The results were predictable for the Vlachs, having been forced to abandon their wanderings naturally did their best to re-create an approximation of their former communal life around the camp-fire to draw some comfort from their new and unfamiliar surroundings. Such scenes did little to improve relations with their already unenthusiastic neighbours, who probably had waited years for a similar flat themselves. A report testified:

There are numerous complaints that gypsies remove the stove from the kitchen to in front of the house where they later cook using as fuel the flooring, door- and window-frames and sometimes even rafters and ceiling, so that the house is soon uninhabitable.

(5:13).

Ideally, however, the nomads were rehoused in "unoccupied, suitably-repaired older houses" (5:13) with the intention that once having reached a "certain standard of living it would be possible to give them progressively better flats. This means that national committees must put them on the housing list like other applicants". (5:13).

#### The Nomads' Register and Control of Population Movement

Ulc<sup>v</sup> suggested that following the enactment of Law 74 "a few nomads were incarcerated but almost all nomads were put on the run.... The net result of the 1958 Act...was that the wandering Gypsy turned into one who 'was wandered'" (Ulc<sup>v</sup> : 426,427), supporting this evaluation by his personal experience.\*

Cases of this sort were freely admitted in official documents. The 1959 manual complained that "several national committees had the practice of sometimes not even trying to place gypsies, preferring to pay their travel and subsistence expenses while sending them home,

---

\* At this time Ulc<sup>v</sup> was a member of the Czechoslovakian judiciary "and in 1959...[a] Deputy District Chairman in charge of 'The Final Solution of the Gypsy Question'." (Ulc<sup>v</sup> : 422 footnote).



mainly to Slovakia. This new form of nomadism at the state's expense cost us in 1957 alone. . . roughly twenty million crowns".\* (5:9).

Although such practices were widespread enough to call for official rebuke, there is insufficient data to justify Ulč's bold claim that this was the general rule. Probably the majority of nomadic and 'semi-nomadic' Gypsies were simply registered where they were found at the time of registration.\*\*

It is not at all clear how many people were initially included on the 1959 nomads' register since official figures vary widely. The important 1967 assessment by the co-ordinating government committee of the results of the 1965 measures gave the number as

\*

There are considerable problems in expressing Czechoslovakian values in terms of sterling equivalents for although it is possible to quote the rates of exchange current during the 1960s (per £1 around 18 crowns 'official rate', 36 crowns 'tourist rate'), a direct translation would be often very misleading.

Perhaps an adequate guide for budgetary sums is provided by dividing an amount in crowns by 20 (e.g. 20 million crowns is something less than £1 million). For smaller sums, however, it is more helpful to see an amount as a proportion of an average monthly wage of 1,500 crowns - bearing in mind that in Czechoslovakia there is a much narrower range of incomes than in Western Europe or even in other socialist-bloc states, often husbands and wives both work, rents and public transport are exceptionally cheap, whilst consumer durables and clothing are liable to be relatively expensive.

\*\*

In the village chosen for intensive study in the Spišská Nová Ves district, there seems to have been a large-scale return of migrants from the Czech lands around 1958. However, this seems to have been as much voluntary remigration motivated by the Gypsies' apprehension at rumoured new measures against them as direct expulsion of Gypsies by Czech local authorities. (See Chapter Seven).

20,000 (94), a 1970 Slovakian government report gave the somewhat higher figure of 27,000 (147), while the 1975 study doubled these with a total of 46,500 (Kára : 56).

Unfortunately none of the three documents in question gave any further information to substantiate its claim but although it cannot be established with certainty which figure is nearest the truth, the

evidence tends to support a lower total. The 1975 figure is suspiciously close to the 1958 anticipation of "probably 46,000 nomads and semi-nomads" (5:8), and this suggests that, rather than deriving from any statistics compiled from the nomads' register, the source of the 1975 figure was really this prior estimate which at the time was admitted by the manual to be "a very imprecise figure" (ibid). Furthermore the 1958 estimate represented roughly 30 per cent of the 150,000 Gypsies in the Republic, yet even in those areas with the heaviest migration rates the proportion of the Gypsy population included on the nomads' register in 1959 fell appreciably below this percentage and elsewhere must have been even lower. For example, of the 8,000-strong Gypsy population of the North Moravia Region only 2,000 were listed as nomads (25 per cent) (14), whilst of 6,914 Gypsies in the Spišská Nová Ves district of East Slovakia, the corresponding figure was 1,671 'persons of gypsy origin' (24 per cent). (27).

Undoubtedly most of the registered nomads were Gypsies, but not all. In the North Moravia Region 2,323 persons were initially listed of which about 300 were not Gypsies (i.e. 13 per cent).\* (14). Whether this pattern was repeated nationally is not known.

Equally difficult to determine is the proportion of nomadic Vlachs on the register, but it cannot have been large. The 45 Vlachs registered in North Moravia represented less than 2 per cent of the region's registered nomads and well under 1 per cent of the total Gypsy population. (Davidová : 60).

---

\* Davidová gives the slightly different figure of 2,399, deriving her data from the regional NC and police records. (Davidová:59,60). Since there was no legal distinction between different kinds of 'nomad', non-Gypsies, Vlachs and migrant Gypsies could only be distinguished in documents by means of their surnames.



As a policy instrument the register soon proved to have serious shortcomings. Firstly the imprecise criteria for identifying nomads meant that selection of those to be registered was necessarily a more or less arbitrary affair but on occasions local authorities were so confused that they even included Gypsies who were clearly ineligible.

In some cases LNCs misunderstood Law 74 or proposed the inclusion of persons not possessing the characteristics of nomadic persons. For example... some LNCs included several pensioners.

(28)

Further confusion stemmed from the manual's deliberate blurring of the important differences between the two quite distinct sorts of mobile Gypsies - wandering Vlachs and migrant workers - in order that both might be lumped together as 'nomads' for legal purposes. In Spišská Nová Ves careful watch was kept in case the district's (non-Vlach) Gypsies might try to leave the district using horses or else make a living as horse-dealers. A 1960 document disappointedly reported:

[Only a single case] where a person of gypsy origin... earns money with a horse. From time to time there are cases where some citizens of gypsy origin buy horses which they use for transporting building materials for family houses. But when their own work is finished they sell them or eat them. (27)

More fundamental a failure was the evident apathy of many local authorities towards the register and, indeed, towards the campaign as a whole.

[Some LNCs] made serious errors while making the register in that they did not ascertain the real state of affairs...or else contented themselves with merely making records while the registered persons wandered around from village to village.

(28)

This unwillingness or inability by NCs to make effective use of the register was apparently widespread. A 1962 report of the N. Moravia RNC had the same story to tell.

If, after an interval of three years, we have to evaluate the results of the register it must be said that the register did not do the job it was meant to mainly because LNCs did not update the registration cards and because these people [Gypsies] continued to move around. So, for example, in the Karvina district 400 adults were placed on the register in 1959, but on 1.1.62 there are 241 registered persons. [Some were de-registered but] 117 left the district and their place of residence is unknown. The situation is similar in other districts.

(14)

Almost a third of registered persons had simply vanished without trace.

Similarly Law 74 was used very rarely, for example only once in the N. Moravia Region in the period up to 5.4.62 (14) and only three times during 1961 in the Spišská Nová Ves district (28). Where cases of nomadism were thought to have occurred, the authorities generally preferred to use existing laws against parasitism.

Although the law and directives directly controlled only registered nomads (less than a quarter of Spišská Nová Ves district's Gypsies), the register had not been intended as a static record and could have been used to control indirectly all of the district's seven thousand Gypsies. For anyone thought to be 'nomadic' could have been subsequently added to the register. But a 1964 report noted that "from the time of drawing up the original register no further persons in the district were included". (47).

If no new persons were added to the register, many were removed from it. In the Spišská Nová Ves district fifty seven had already been removed by late 1962 (37) and a 1964 report showed a reduction in the total number of registered persons of 23% over the three year period from mid-1961 to mid-1964. (52).\*

Removals from the register, however, appeared quite as arbitrary as the original entries. One LNC was cited as an example of this for removing a person from the register who was not even permanently employed. (47).

To combat this freedom of interpretation practised by many LNCs new regulations for removing persons from the register were issued by the DNC in 1961 (evidently without sufficient effect) and again in 1964. These 1964 regulations showed so clearly that the real criteria involved were more an evaluation of general way of life than of 'nomadism' as such, they deserve to be quoted at length.

The applicant must present a confirmation that he has worked regularly from the time of registration in one firm, a testimony from his employers about his attitude to work and that they are willing to continue employing him. The LNC committee [for gypsy affairs] must evaluate his family life, how he brings up his children, whether he has committed any offence and his whole behaviour in public and in general.

In the applicant fulfils the above conditions he may be...[removed from the register]...and issued with a new identity card without the stamp that he is included on the register.

This...is conditional for should the applicant avoid work or change his job more frequently in the future, his identity card will be stamped once more that he is on the register. (51)

---

\* 158 persons still remained on the register at the end of 1967 (130).



Yet it is unlikely that these new instructions were any more effective for the simple reason that LNCs were unwilling to use the register and Law 74 to control Gypsy population movement because this made them responsible for accommodation, employment and subsequent supervision. It was less trouble to use other methods of coercing Gypsies when necessary - such as the regulations for residence registration or else the existing law against parasitism - and otherwise to ignore them.

#### Migration and the Labour Market

As has been shown, the nomads' register proved quite inadequate as a means of checking Gypsy migration for apart from the fact that a smaller proportion of Gypsies than anticipated had been initially registered as nomads, even these numbers were progressively reduced as local authorities eagerly shed their burdensome responsibilities. Moreover it was soon apparent that many local authorities had little interest in supervising those still remaining on the register. Not only did registered nomads frequently disappear without authorisation from their legal place of residence but attempts to prevent or trace such movement were generally ineffectual. Meanwhile Law 74 itself was enforced so sparingly that its usefulness as an instrument of control was negligible.

Although this is how frustrated policy-makers saw the situation, it is necessary to realise that to the Gypsies the nomads' register in particular must have appeared quite differently, for scarcely more than a dozen years earlier the compilation of another register of Gypsies had been the first stage in a plan to annihilate them.

To them, therefore, the 1958 measures were full of hidden menace. In spite of official declarations of good intent the Gypsies' new trust in the Communist Party was undermined by ingrained fears of renewed persecution, deepened no doubt by insinuations by malicious Slovak villagers of a grim fate in store.

The fact that so many Gypsies dared to defy the arbitrary restrictions on their previous freedom of movement, although dreading the unpredictable outcome of their actions, testifies not to their blithe disregard of all laws - as many officials believed - but rather to the strength of their motivation. In short, they believed the potential rewards to be worth the risk.

Although it was acknowledged in the manual that some Gypsies had migrated for better work opportunities, the mobility of the majority was regarded as an integral part of their 'backward way of life'. This view found expression in the phrasing of Law 74, where a 'nomad' 'wanders from place to place and avoids honest work or makes his living in some disreputable way', and in innumerable local authority reports. Representative was the tart comment by an Ostrava NC official that:

Gypsies came to our city for the sole reason that here they could better pursue their criminal careers concealed by the anonymity of urban life.\*

(Survey)

The corrective 'process of socialist education' was to employ 'nomads' on a regular basis in the place where they were registered

---

\* This was the same argument that Western European officials had used to protest against twentieth century urbanisation of nomadic Gypsies. (See Chapter Two).

and to keep them there until re-education had been completed. Unfortunately this policy had been decided without any prior matching of Gypsy population concentrations with labour requirements and although some allowance had been made for re-adjustments, these were expected to be relatively minor.

In spite of this important omission there seemed good grounds for optimism since the economy's heavy demand for unskilled labour which had triggered off the initial Gypsy migration and maintained it during the 1950s, continued into the 1960s as the planners clung to their familiar recipe of extensive economic growth. Rather than making more efficient use of already existing plant (intensive growth), this meant increasing productive capacity by the construction of new factories - especially in the sector of heavy industry, with the inevitable requirement for unskilled workers to build and man them. In spite of serious economic stagnation from 1961 to 1964 the planned increase in the labour force estimated in the Third Five-Year Plan (1961-65) was actually exceeded.

The Plan postulated an increase of 440,000 workers - and by the end of 1965 more than 650,000 workers had actually been added to the work force. Of these some 436,000 were women....This extensive development of the labour supply brought with it...serious problems of work morale, general qualifications of the recruits, and the resulting effect on productivity of labour....

On the part of the men, such a high level of employment also had adverse effects, as can be seen in the case of construction....There the fact that if a worker was fired he could go around the corner and get another job, reduced work morale; absences increased; and the volume of idle time mounted....The index of productivity in construction dropped from 220 in 1961 (1948=100) to only 182 in 1963. Such a decline is closely related to the recruitment of an additional 268,000 construction workers from 1948 to 1961, or more than double the original number.

(Wheeler : 63,62).



Whatever the detrimental effects to the economy of drawing on the country's entire labour reserves to sustain the rate of extensive development, the insatiable demand for unskilled labour clearly put the labour potential of male Gypsies at a premium. However this demand was not uniform and in spite of major projects such as the East Slovakia Steelworks near Košice<sup>V</sup> (completed in 1966), the industrialisation of Slovakia had still not reached the stage where employment opportunities were equal in both halves of the Republic. In consequence many areas in Slovakia suffered a glut of labour power at a time of acute national shortage. Naturally it was the Gypsies, as the least trained and desirable section of the labour force, that were most directly affected by this situation. For them the practical choice was still between seeking work locally in relatively low-paid agricultural jobs or else migrating for the higher wages of industry - the classic dilemma of the migrant worker.

Slovakian local authorities were sometimes reluctant to admit the position. A 1962 report of the Spišská Nová Ves DNC insisted that "job opportunities in the district are sufficient"\* (34) and blamed the departure of Gypsies on the fact that "Gypsies do not take their work seriously and their work-morale is unstable so, as a result, local firms do not want to employ them in greater numbers". (ibid).

---

\* This claim was also disproved by a 1970 survey of employment in the district. (See the following Chapter).

Later it was conceded that the district's basic employment situation was otherwise; there were not enough jobs to go round. Other reports recorded the Gypsies' response to their predicament and, very exceptionally, even showed a degree of sympathetic approval.

Some citizens included in the register for bad work morale were not immediately found employment and went off secretly to work in the Czech lands, in this way breaking the law. (27)

It is necessary to bear in mind critically the circumstance that in our district the opportunity to work was not offered to all registered persons, therefore they were right to seek job opportunities in other districts, most often in the Czech lands.(28)

(My emphasis).

Yet even if there had been sufficient appropriate jobs in the district, this would still not have compared to the urgent labour needs of the Czech industrial areas. It was this basic difference in labour markets which explained why "the managers of [local] firms [did] not respect the...decree that citizens of gypsy origin may not be released from employment without the prior consent of the DNC labour department". (41). It also explained the complementary fact that:

...several works, mainly in the Czech lands, offer jobs to registered persons without the agreement of the labour department of the DNC where they are permanent residents....In such cases these people are registered as temporary residents, but without the consent of the NC where they are permanent residents. (32)

This 1962 report mentioned thirty-one such cases.

The importance of the Czech labour market for Spišská Nová Ves Gypsies can be seen from statistics which show that in 1961 and 1962 around half of the newly employed Gypsies were absorbed there. It was this migration to which the DNC labour department objected so strongly.

Proportion of newly employed Gypsies finding work  
in the Czech lands.

| Period           | Newly employed Gypsy workers |     |       | Of which finding work in the Czech lands |     |       | % of newly employed Gypsies finding work in the Czech lands. |      |
|------------------|------------------------------|-----|-------|--|-----|-------|--|------|
|                  | total                        | men | women | total                                    | men | women |  |      |
| 1961             | 439                          | 408 | 31    | 206                                      | 178 | 28    | 46.8%  | (34) |
| 1.1.62 to 1.9.62 | 333                          | 318 | 15    | 196                                      | 182 | 14    | 58.9%  | (37) |

A 1962 survey of 481 'Gypsy houses in need of improvement' confirmed this, showing that over a quarter of Gypsy houseowners in the Spišská Nová Ves district were employed in the Czech lands. Although the quality of sample is not clear, its size is large being 48% of the total 996 Gypsy houses in the district. (37).

Workplace of 481 Gypsy houseowners.

| Workplace of Gypsy houseowner | In home village | In district outside village | Elsewhere in E.Slovak Region | Elsewhere in Slovakia | In Czech lands. | (38) |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|------|
| % of house-owners             | 22              | 41                          | 8                            | 2                     | 27              |      |

This migration was not only to Czech industrial areas however for the combination of a labour shortage in the Czech lands and higher wages paid by industry left Czech agriculture under-manned, especially at harvest time. Many Gypsies therefore went to work as seasonal



labourers. "In the summer gypsy citizens leave to work in the Czech lands without their families and in winter return home and do not work...at all". (41). As well as agriculture the other great seasonal employer was, of course, the building industry.

Gypsy population movement was not all out-migration from Slovakia for there was a constant stream returning from the Czech lands, although numbers are difficult to estimate. Whether registered as nomads or not, such Gypsies were generally grudgingly admitted to have a human right to resume living in their home settlement - although nowhere else as a rule - but in a few cases NCs resisted the return of Gypsies who had not retained a nominal permanent residence at home during their spell in the Czech lands.

Four [Gypsies], permanent residents of Karvina [N.Moravia Region] moved...[back to Spišská Nová Ves] without any permission for permanent residence. When they were told to go back [to Karvina] where they had come from...they refused saying they would not move, even if an attempt were made to remove them forcibly. (17).

Ironically this failure to control Gypsy migration played an important part in the major success of the policy - the improvement in the Gypsy employment rate. The figures for Spišská Nová Ves show steady progress year by year although the proportion of women in regular employment remained low. This was partly because Gypsy women of productive age were also of reproductive age and generally had small children to care for, but it was more due to the lack of job opportunities for women - a general problem in Slovakia. Many Gypsy women did in fact work locally as seasonal farm or forestry workers but since this was not regarded as regular employment for statistical purposes, it did not appear in official tables.

The improvement in the Gypsy employment rate  
(1961-1964).

|         | Date    | Gypsies of productive age* | Regularly employed |    | not regularly working |     |       |
|---------|---------|----------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|-----|-------|
|         |         |                            | No.                | %  | Total                 | men | women |
| (29)    | 1961    | 3,251                      | 1,402              | 43 | 1,849                 | 467 | 1,382 |
| (45,40) | 8.11.63 | 3,651                      | 1,686              | 46 | 1,965                 | 213 | 1,752 |
| (55)    | 3.11.64 | 3,851                      | 2,186              | 57 | 1,665                 | -   | -     |

\* Men 15 - 60 years, women 15 - 55 years.

Also remarkable was the similarity in distribution of employment type for Gypsies and non-Gypsies, although the nearly doubled proportion of Gypsies in the building industry was notable.

Employment type : Comparison of Gypsies and  
non-Gypsies. (1962)

| Percentage of workers employed in | National Average                |                       | Percentage of sampled Gypsy workers |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
|                                   | wages per sector (Crowns/month) | percentage of workers |                                     |
| Industry                          | 1,477                           | 43.0                  | 46.5                                |
| Agriculture                       | 1,178                           | 23.8                  | 21.2                                |
| Building                          | 1,532                           | 9.3                   | 16.8                                |
| Transport                         | 1,572                           | 6.9                   | 3.0                                 |
| Other                             | -                               | 17.0                  | 12.5                                |
| TOTAL                             | -                               | 100.0                 | 100.0                               |

(Handbook : 116)

(Facts : 90)

(38)

The sample of Gypsy workers was the same 481 house-owners and therefore the relatively high percentage of Gypsies shown as employed in industry was probably a distortion for a worker in industry or the building industry was more likely to be a house-owner because of the higher wages. On the other hand, this was counter-balanced by the fact that the sample was of 'houses in need of improvement'.

The same 1962 survey also gave data about the income of 519 Gypsy families living in the 481 houses sampled. The figures are extremely difficult to compare with national statistics since family and work patterns are so dissimilar. Whereas in a typical Czechoslovak family there will be one child and both parents will work, in a typical Gypsy family there will be four or five children and the wife will not work. However, since the generous family allowance on five children (maximum 950 crowns/month (Facts : 109) can be roughly equated with a working Czechoslovak wife's monthly wages, a very crude comparison can be made.

Comparison of Gypsy and non-Gypsy workers' wages.

| National average wages<br>(Crowns/month) | % of workers | Gypsy workers' wages<br>(Crowns/month) | % of workers |
|--|--------------|--|--------------|
| Below 1,000                              | 21           | Below 833                              | 38           |
| 1,000-2,000                              | 68           | 833-1,666                              | 46           |
| 2,000-3,000                              | 10           | 1,666-2,500                            | 13           |
| over 3,000                               | 1            | over 2,500                             | 3            |

(Facts : 99)

(38)



This table shows that although over a third of Gypsies were still undoubtedly poor, almost two thirds had already achieved by 1962 an income within the range of the national average.

There was little progress in increasing the proportion of qualified workers among Gypsies (in 1963 the national average of qualified workers was one in six (Facts)) but on the whole progress in employment came closer to 1958 expectations than any other aspect of the 'Gypsy question'. Gradually Gypsies were attaining at least the basic economic means which were regarded as the key to the whole complex process of socio-economic equalisation.

#### Accommodation and the Dispersal of Population Concentrations

If employment showed the most progress, accommodation probably showed the least. The failure of local authorities to disperse Gypsy population concentrations was more complete even than their inability to control migration, for at least they had managed to settle the Vlachs.

As might have been expected the situation was most critical in the region with most Gypsies - rural East Slovakia.

The greater part of the gypsy population live in settlements lying between five hundred metres and four kilometers from [Slovak] villages, in places which are inaccessible and without roads. Most [settlements] are in places in which no-one had any interest - neither town, village nor individuals. The humble, temporary huts were built in various valleys,...ravines, at the edge of the forest, on the slopes behind villages where they were not easily visible.

Most were built during the period of the so-called Slovak state [during the Second World War]. The oldest settlements which still exist were built near roads, at cross-roads or beneath castle walls.

Gypsy settlements even sprang up in our district during the Austro-Hungarian era when individual groups settled when permitted by the social order of that day....During the period of the first republic [ 1918-38 ] ....further settlements grew up.

(63).

This account of Gypsy settlements in the Spišská Nová Ves district referred, not to the pre-1958 situation, but to that of 1965. For all its inaccuracy in characteristically underestimating the age of the district's settlements,\* this report is nevertheless remarkable among official documents for its graphic description of the physical isolation of Gypsy settlements - and its implication of the corresponding social isolation of their inhabitants. Most reports contented themselves with dry statistics.

Living conditions in the settlements were as primitive as their remoteness suggested. Statistics from different years were often incompatible, chiefly because what would be called a settlement in one report would be regarded as an integrated part of a Slovak village in the next. Similarly some officials would regard a wooden house as a hut, while to others it would be a house. Bearing these inconsistencies in mind, a 1962 report (37) listed 67 Gypsy settlements in the Spišská Nová Ves district containing 988 of the total 1303 Gypsy families. The remaining 315 families were 'dispersed' in Slovak villages but

---

\* See the previous chapter for a discussion of the motivation. This particular report included the two settlements studied in detail among those allegedly founded between the wars, yet a study of parish records and local testimony confirmed their presence at least as far back as the early nineteenth century.

it is highly probable that this figure also included families living together in Gypsy quarters on the outskirts of a village. These 988 families lived in 996 dwellings of which 250 were said to be huts; the empty dwellings probably belonged to migrants to the Czech lands.

There were severe deficiencies in basic amenities - drinking water and toilets. Of the 67 settlements, 22 were completely without a well or pump of their own and in 13 settlements drinking water could only be obtained from a nearby stream. (37). To rectify this critical situation in the 22 settlements, wells were planned in 8 settlements for 1962 and in 14 for 1963 to be financed from 'Campaign 'Z'' funds at a cost of 10,000 Crowns per well. As for toilets, there was a grand total of 196-even in 1964 - of which none were hygienically adequate (55). This meant that 80% of all Gypsy dwellings in settlements were without toilets and their occupants were forced to use the surroundings of the settlements with a resulting increase in the danger of contaminating the already unsafe drinking water supplies.

A more detailed idea of living conditions was given by the 1962 survey.

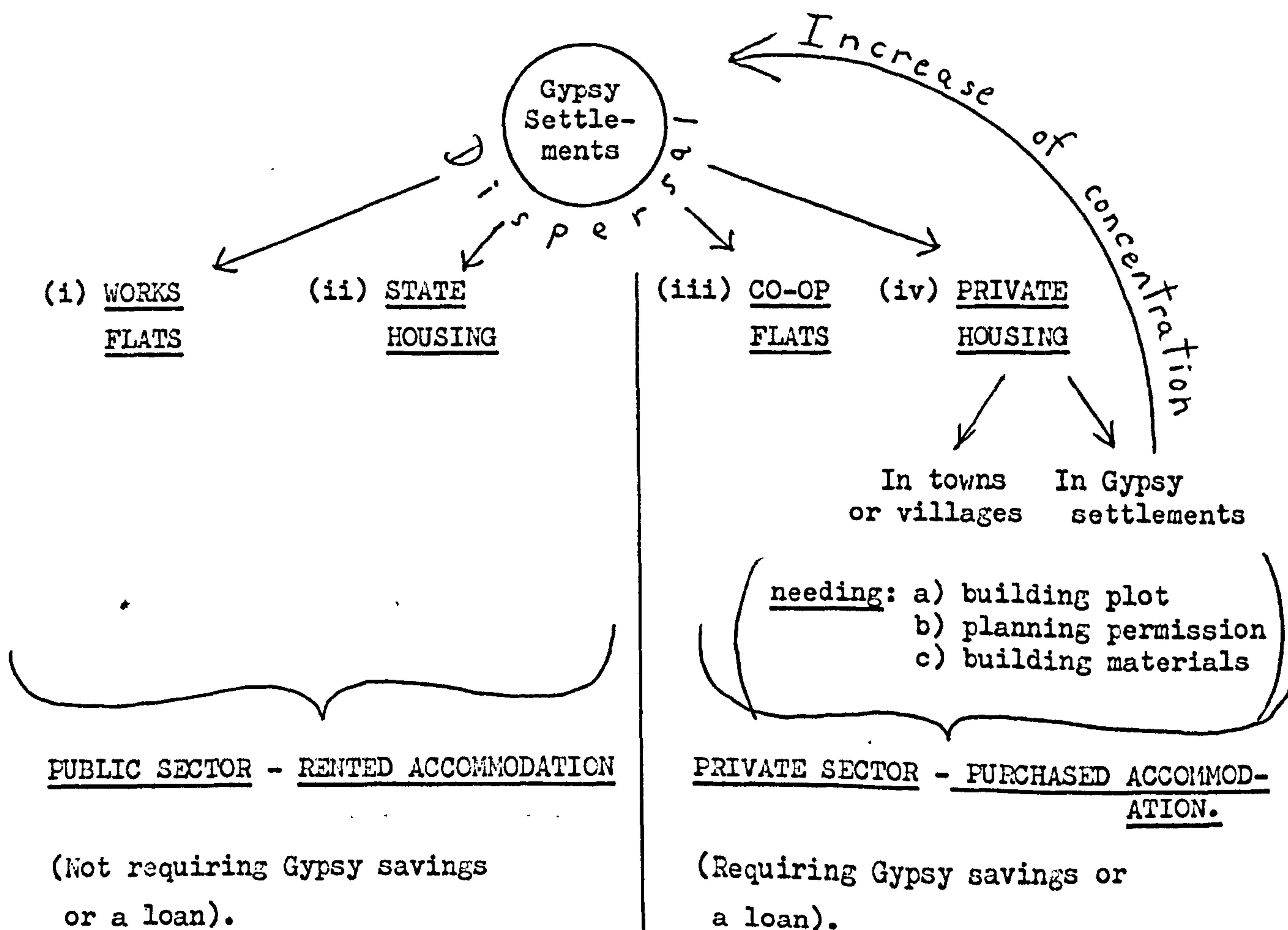


Survey of 481 Gypsy houses in need of improvement (38).

|   |                             |            |
|---|-----------------------------|------------|
| <u>Location of houses</u> ‡             | In [Slovak] village         | 119        |
|   | In [Gypsy] settlement       | <u>362</u> |
| <u>Type of dwelling</u> ‡               | House                       | 168        |
|   | Hut                         | <u>313</u> |
| <u>Type of building material</u> ‡      | Brick                       | 93         |
|   | Wood                        | 315        |
|   | Clay                        | 46         |
|   | Stone                       | <u>27</u>  |
| <u>State of repair</u> :                | Very good                   | 1          |
|   | Moderate                    | 46         |
|   | Ramshackle                  | 221        |
| (Immediate action necessary)            | Disintegrating              | <u>213</u> |
| <u>Living rooms per house</u> :         | 1 room                      | 266        |
| (including bedroom and                  | 2 rooms                     | 187        |
| living room but not                     | 3 rooms                     | 23         |
| kitchen).                               | 4 rooms or more             | <u>5</u>   |
| <u>Living space per house</u> :         | up to 10m <sup>2</sup>      | 30         |
|   | " " 30m <sup>2</sup>        | 254        |
|   | " " 60m <sup>2</sup>        | 170        |
|   | " " 100m <sup>2</sup>       | 22         |
|   | more than 100m <sup>2</sup> | <u>5</u>   |
| <u>Density of occupation per house:</u> | Empty                       | 50         |
|   | 1 family                    | 330        |
|   | 2 families                  | 80         |
|   | 3-4 families                | 27         |
|   | 5 or more families          | <u>0</u>   |
| <u>Family size</u> :                    | up to 5 members             | 256        |
| (for 519 families in 481                | " " 10 "                    | 220        |
| houses)                                 | " " 15 "                    | 39         |
|   | more than 15 members        | <u>4</u>   |
| <u>Toilets</u> :                        | Flush                       | 0          |
|   | With cess-pit(closed)       | 27         |
|   | latrine                     | 44         |
|   | None                        | <u>410</u> |

|   |                              |            |
|---|------------------------------|------------|
| <u>Access to water :</u>                                | In house                     | 3          |
|   | Own well in yard             | 11         |
|   | Well distant up to 50m.      | 163        |
|   | " " " " 100m.                | 91         |
|   | " " " " 300m.                | 120        |
|   | " more than 300m.            | 24         |
|   | Without water (from stream)  | <u>69</u>  |
| <u>Adequacy of water supply:</u><br>from health reasons | Suitable                     | 166        |
|   | Unsuitable                   | 246        |
|   | Without water                | <u>69</u>  |
| <u>Electricity supply:</u>                              | Connected                    | 193        |
|   | Not connected but possible   | 105        |
|   | No possibility of connection | <u>183</u> |

In dispersing Gypsies from the deteriorating conditions of the overcrowded settlements, local authorities had a choice of accommodation possibilities, shown below in schematic form.



i) Given the relatively unfavourable employment situation for Gypsies in much of rural Slovakia it seemed unlikely that employers would enthusiastically provide them with works flats. Attempts were made to require enterprises to reserve a fixed quota of their accommodation for Gypsy employees but had little effect, as a 1963 report showed.

The principle of allocating 5% [of works flats]  
for employees of gypsy origin is not respected  
by the works.

(45)

ii) State housing was a better bet, especially using older renovated houses as the manual had suggested, but suitable buildings were in short supply. For example only five were purchased by the DMC in 1964. (29,55). The number of ordinary state flats allocated to Gypsies was also disappointingly low\* and even if the planned quotas had been fulfilled, only 0.18 per cent of the district's Gypsy population would have been rehoused in this way, which was even less than the proportion of all Slovakian inhabitants who actually received a state flat during the same period (0.2 per cent).

iii) In the original 1958 plans there had been little expectation that Gypsies would seek co-operative flats since this was not only better quality housing as a rule but required a substantial cash deposit from each member of the co-operative before a state loan was granted to cover the remainder of the building expenses.

---

\* In this respect the performance of the district was exceptionally poor, its rate being well below that for Gypsies in the East Slovakia Region and in Slovakia as a whole. (See below).



Nevertheless some Gypsies tried to use their savings to join a housing co-operative but usually encountered much hostility.

In many cases a citizen of gypsy origin is subjected to many pressures and manoeuvres aimed at depriving him of his membership as soon as he becomes a housing co-op member. A case in point occurred in [the town of] Spišská Nová Ves where for unknown reasons [a gypsy woman] was expelled from a co-op and her deposit returned to her. She was a citizen who lived in a decent and civilised way....

Other members of a co-op [often] refuse to accept a gypsy family [and]...in some cases a threat is made to dissolve the co-op.

(22)

Although incomplete, the following table gives some idea of the small number of Gypsies rehoused in state, works and co-op flats in the Spišská Nová Ves district between 1959 and 1964.

Rehousing Gypsies by State, Works and Co-op flats.

| Period                  | State flats |         | Co-op flats |         | Works flats |         |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------|-------------|---------|-------------|---------|
|                         | Plan        | Reality | Plan        | Reality | Plan        | Reality |
| (27) 1959-X-60          |             | 19      |             |         |             |         |
| (33,29) 1961            | 12          | 9       | ∅           |         | 2           |         |
| (27,29) 1962            | 15          | ?       | ∅           |         | 6           |         |
| (29,55)<br>(45,46) 1963 | 18          | 10      | ∅           | 6       | 5           | 11      |
| (29,55)<br>(60,50) 1964 | 20          | 6       | ∅           | 6       | 3           |         |

iv) In Slovakian towns and villages the characteristic type of accommodation was not the more recent block of works, state or co-op flats but the privately-owned detached family house, often built by the owner and his family in their spare time. This preference was shared by the Gypsies too and many of them had amassed considerable savings to build such a house. The most effective means of dispersing Gypsies in Slovakia, therefore, was for local authorities to assist them to build or buy their own houses outside the Gypsy settlements by enabling them to obtain plots of land, scarce building materials and, in deserving cases, by providing them with interest-free loans as well.

However the 1959 manual had recognised that the resistance of Slovak villagers and their NCs had frequently been so strong that Gypsies had been forced to build their new homes in their segregated settlements or not at all. Some Gypsies, of course, were quite content to build alongside their parents and brothers but others would have preferred the village in spite of the hostility - for the superior status of living among the "whites" or perhaps to escape prying relatives. But there were more concrete reasons too: settlements usually lacked basic amenities such as water, electricity, public lighting, roads and convenient shops. The same house, built as part of the village proper was worth much more and also was resaleable to someone other than a local settlement Gypsy.\*

---

\* Attempts by Gypsies to build in the village were no new phenomenon:

In 1927 a group of 13 Gypsies requested building plots outside their settlement in a village [near Kežmarok (E.Slovakia) but...] the council refused because 'to spread Gypsies in this way is against the interest of the entire community'. (Kára : 384).

Recently there have been many cases where Gypsies build normal houses by themselves, but as a rule in some gypsy settlement. This is mainly in Slovakia where other people often do not want to permit gypsies in the town or village. They use various means to achieve this like raising the price of plots of land or, where gypsies already have obtained plots, even by demolishing already completed buildings. Gypsies are in this way sent back to the old gypsy settlements which they would be glad to leave. Such cases must be condemned as strongly as possible especially where this is done with the silent agreement or even active help of NC members.

(5 : 48).

In spite of this clear warning NCs in the Spišská Nová Ves district continued to carry out the will of their local electors rather than that of central government. The most common means of preventing Gypsies from breaking out of their settlements, "attested by a whole series of cases,... [was where NCs] did not want to allocate plots for private building [to gypsies]" (45), or where, "as in Spišská Nová Ves in several cases, the MNC did not agree to the purchase of houses [by gypsies]" (45). Local authorities also "made it hard for them...to ensure building materials and difficulties were experienced in obtaining loans". (10). In 1963 only three loans were made to Gypsies in the district and in 1964 a further four (totalling 56,000 crowns).\*

This widespread opposition was regarded so seriously that in 1963 the secretary of the DNC Gypsy Affairs Committee recommended:

---

\* What is remarkable is that even without such loans so many Gypsies were able to build substantial brick houses, albeit in their settlements. A 1963 estimate (39) costed the construction of a typical family house at 78,381 crowns although most Gypsies, using their own labour and second-hand building materials, would generally have paid significantly less for such a house.



"This will have to be regarded as a breach of state discipline by LNC officials" (45) and two years later the DNC instructed that "where LNCs refuse to provide building plots, the names of the villages and the number of applicants should be reported". (62). Yet there is no evidence that any action was taken against offenders. Only occasionally did the DNC manage to overcome LNC resistance, as in 1962 when "the DNC Gypsy Affairs Committee succeeded in resolving six cases by buying plots for private building by Gypsies in the village proper in spite of opposition by LNC officials". (37).

Statistics on the subject are both incomplete and unreliable but the share of building permits issued to Gypsies appears to be more than their proportion of the whole population. Their need was incomparably greater, of course, and the figures give no indication of the number of applications that were refused or otherwise frustrated.

Building permits : comparison of Gypsies and non-Gypsies.

|                | Period        | Total building permits issued | Of which to Gypsies |         | Proportion of permits to Gypsies |
|----------------|---------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------------------|
|                |               |                               | Plan                | Reality |                                  |
| (27)           | 1959.X.60     | 330                           |                     | 29      | 8.8%                             |
| (29,33)        | 1961          |                               | 45                  | 18      |                                  |
| (29,27)        | 1962          |                               | 50                  | 14      |                                  |
| (29,55, 45,46) | 1963          |                               | 61                  | 14      |                                  |
| (29,55, 50,60) | 1964          | 70                            |                     | 11      | 15.7%                            |
|                | TOTAL 1959-64 | -                             | -                   | 86      |                                  |

It is probable that the number of houses actually built by Gypsies was roughly equivalent to the number of permits issued (e.g. 18 houses were built in 1961 and 11 in 1963). Indeed some of the permits simply legalised the existence of houses already constructed, for in the face of such opposition it was not surprising the " gypsy citizens in many cases...build houses without planning permission". (45).

It is unlikely that any significant reduction in the size of Gypsy settlements in the district was achieved in the period from 1958 to 1965 for the population losses caused by out-migration and rehousing were more than compensated by the continuing high birth-rate. This lack of impact is evident from the almost static rate of demolition. Only five huts were demolished in 1963 and four in 1964 (55), while not a single settlement was eliminated.

Yet it would be wrong to see the development of the Gypsy accommodation problem during the period 1958 to 1965 entirely as DNC impotence in the face of united LNC opposition for attitudes of LNCs varied enormously. In some places (e.g. Spišský Štvrtok, Smižany etc.) there had not been isolated Gypsy settlements as such for many years and although Gypsy houses tended to be built together as a quarter, there were occasional Gypsy houses among those of non-Gypsies. Apparently little outright opposition was offered by such LNCs and of them, (including the better of the settlements studied in detail), the DNC wrote:

...it must be noted that despite many shortcomings and lack of attention paid by NCs, the hygiene and living conditions are gradually improving and there are cases where citizens of gypsy origin live in normal dwellings where the living conditions are reasonably good. (45)

A fairer overall assessment would be that 1958 had not basically changed the situation; those LNCs where ethnic relations had been relatively good continued to integrate their Gypsies, while others found that in spite of DNC directives and protests they could continue in their previous practice of segregation with impunity.

Regrettably there is not enough data to make a similar survey of contemporary developments in the Czech industrial areas but it is clear that in the urban districts - where home-building was impracticable - Gypsies fell victim to the rapidly worsening general housing shortage. One Czech NC admitted the problem frankly:

We badly neglected the question of accommodation for Gypsies but it is not easy. Our NC has 5,200 applications on the waiting list for flats.

(5)

#### The Absence of Administrative Control

In the initially confused situation following the 1959 directives, it was impossible to evaluate the performance of national committees. The Spišská Nová Ves DNC was apparently active in planning measures to hasten the assimilation of Gypsies, even to the extent of mounting a 1959 campaign to urge Gypsies to change their characteristic surnames for Slovak ones.

This campaign was not sufficiently understood by these citizens for even those who changed their surnames continue to use their old shameful names. It will be necessary for LNCs....to urge citizens of gypsy origin to change their old and, in their language, ridiculous surnames. (46)

Yet by 1963 the widespread apathy and resistance to the 1958 policy had already aroused serious official concern. In an extremely



critical report from this year the secretary of the DNC committee for Gypsy affairs concluded that "the situation is such that NCs think the Gypsy Affairs Committees make the decisions and do not bear in mind that these are only advisory committees to the DNC, or LNCs". (45)

Inactivity was apparently typical at both DNC and LNC levels, although this took different forms. Another 1963 report commented that although the DNC committee sat monthly, "a relatively serious shortcoming in the work of the committee is the poor attendance at its meetings on the part of social organisations and certain DNC departments - chiefly finance and planning". (40). The same report stated that a "control commission had found the fulfilment by LNCs of the Central Committee decree to be inadequate", naming several LNCs including those studied in the field-work. Based on findings such as these the report continued: "LNCs and their advisory committees ...concern themselves with the [gypsy] question only rarely or not at all" and concluded with the general condemnation that "it is a fact that very little attention is paid to fulfilling the Party and government decrees....In most cases they have not been fulfilled to the slightest degree". (40).

As has been shown the major failures resulting from this general apathy were in preventing migration and conversely in promoting dispersal. In the more elusive area of migration control the DNC apparently limited its role to the provision of jobs.

Even though, according to the law, the department [of labour] cannot completely prevent the departure of these [gypsy] workers from the district, every possibility was used to employ the majority...in our district so that unnecessary job-changing did not result.

(34).

When this passive approach proved insufficient, the DNC resigned itself to the inevitable - contenting itself with occasional querulous complaints that employers ignored the regulations but making no attempt to enforce them. Probably the real purpose of such complaints was only to excuse DNC inactivity to higher authorities.

If the principle were respected that agreement to moving would not be given until a document were produced, attesting that adequate accommodation and work were available at the new workplace, then Law 74/1958 and the Ministry of the Interior directive would not be infringed and this law would become a real aid in eliminating the social differences of gypsy citizens.

(28).

The inability of local authorities to stamp out migration had been unexpected by the 1958 policy-makers but as early as 1959 widespread popular resistance to dispersal had been detected and condemned. The Slovak version of the government manual gave a critical analysis of the situation.

It is necessary to state quite openly that the delay in solving these questions and the often completely negative attitude to the decisive step [of 1958] is due to individual NCs whose members and officials were not able to overcome their own prejudices against citizens of gypsy origin....

[To counteract this damaging opposition] it is necessary to intervene wherever an NC works either formally or sluggishly and even more so when it does not obey or even goes against the directives.

(7 : 11,12,18).

As has been shown the DNC occasionally suggested that the most intransigent LNCs should be reported for a 'breach of state discipline' but in spite of the detailed evidence of obstruction, provided by control commissions' reports which named specific offending villages, no effective punitive action appears to have been taken.

Yet LNC hostility was not entirely to blame for the slow progress for apart from those Gypsies with savings the DNC was expected to finance virtually all of the dispersal from its own budget. For a district such as Spišská Nová Ves, with over six thousand Gypsies living in settlements, this was no small burden. A 1963 report stated bluntly:

We have already informed the finance department of the RNC of our financial requirements. However, up till now we have only planned for we have no funds....The elimination of gypsy settlements can only be undertaken effectively if money is provided. LNC members say the same. (39).

THE OVERALL SITUATION IN THE EAST SLOVAKIA REGION AND SLOVAKIA FOLLOWING THE 1958 MEASURES.

What is remarkable about the experience of the Spišská Nová Ves district is not its uniqueness but to the contrary its apparent similarity to the overall situation in the East Slovakia Region in particular and to a certain extent in Slovakia as a whole. This was revealed by two key reports which had great influence in the subsequent reformulation of national measures in 1965. These were general assessments of the situation by the East Slovakia RNC Committee for Gypsy Affairs in December 1963 (21) and by the Slovak Planning Commission a year later in November 1964. (10).

The latter report was the basis of Slovak National Council Decree No.58/1965 which urged the need for re-thinking the current programme and eventually led to the meeting of the Praesidia of the Central Committees of the Slovak and Czechoslovak CPs on the 15th June 1965. A few months later in October 1965, the new overall measures were published in Government Decree No.502/1965. (147).



The East Slovakia RNC and Slovak Planning Commission reports concluded, as had the Spišská Nová Ves reports, that the situation was critical in all of its aspects and was continuing to worsen as a result of the undiminished high birth-rate of Gypsies. Since increased inoculation and generally improved medical treatment was reducing the mortality rate among Gypsies more swiftly than they could be persuaded to adopt contraceptive measures, the success of some post-1958 measures was, to some extent, paradoxically aggravating this problem.

Comparative population increase in the East Slovakia  
Region - Gypsies and non-Gypsies. (30.12.63). (21)

| Total Gypsy population. | Annual population increase |       | Annual % pop.increase for all E. Slovak Reg. |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------|--|
|                         | No.                        | %     |  |
| 69,799                  | 3,300 to 3,500             | 4.69% | 2.26%  |

Both overall statistics and assessments told the same tale as the more detailed documents of the Spišská Nová Ves district.

Most encouraging once more was the work situation where a dramatic improvement in employment level was claimed, although the 1958 figure was probably too low and the 1963 figure suspiciously high.

Improvement in Gypsy employment level - E. Slovak Region.

| Date     | Gypsies of productive age | Of which employed |     |      |
|----------|---------------------------|-------------------|-----|------|
|          |                           | No.               | %   |      |
| 12.11.58 | 22,800                    | 4,540             | 22% | (16) |
| 30.12.63 | 29,049                    | 10,500            | 71% | (21) |

Accommodation remained a major problem for the vast majority of Gypsies in Slovakia still lived in isolated and segregated settlements and there seemed little prospect of any significant change. By the end of 1965 a total of 45 settlements and 2,500 huts had been eliminated but "although probably 3,000 families moved out of settlements during the period [1959-65], the number of Gypsies living in settlements and huts rose as a result of the high birth-rate by almost 3,000 persons so that the average number of persons living in one hut rose from 6.1 in 1958 to 7.4 in 1965".(147).

In the E. Slovak Region's 435 settlements still lived 55,656 Gypsies (i.e. 79.7% of the region's 69,799 Gypsies) for only twelve settlements had been eliminated by 1965, of which nine in 1963 and 1964 (20,21,22). The level of living conditions in these settlements was indicated by the official category-names given in the following table.

Living conditions in E.Slovak Region Gypsy settlements. (21)

| Houses in<br>Gypsy<br>settlements. | of which                |       |                     |       |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|
|                                    | "hygenically revolting" |       | "dangerous to life" |       |
|                                    | No.                     | %     | No.                 | %     |
| 8,094                              | 6,636                   | 82.3% | 4,578               | 56.2% |

These conditions partly consisted of severe overcrowding. Rather surprisingly there were fewer households per house for Gypsies than for the country as a whole, but because Gypsy houses were generally smaller ( $30m^2$  as opposed to  $40m^2$ ) and more importantly because their families were larger (averaging six members compared to a national average of 3.2) an E. Slovak settlement Gypsy had well under half the living space of the average Czechoslovak.

Relative overcrowding of settlement Gypsies (E. Slovak Reg.)

|                                   | Total pop. | No. of households  | No. of houses/flats | Households per house | Persons per house | Av. area-per person (m <sup>2</sup> ) |
|-----------------------------------|------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| +Czechoslovakia                   | 14,240,000 | 4,400,000          | 3,800,000           | 1.16                 | 3.7               | 10.8                                  |
| ⊙Gypsies in E. Slovak settlements | 55,656     | 9,276 <sup>⊙</sup> | 8,094               | 1.15                 | 6.9               | 4.2                                   |

+ (Facts : 8, 113).

⊙ (21, 1967 Census : 11<sup>⊙</sup>)

Probably even more serious than the overcrowding was the lack of the basic amenities - reliable drinking water and toilets. In the East Slovakia Region for example there was one adequate well for 291 Gypsies and one adequate toilet for 251 Gypsies.

Yet despite the national housing shortage and in particular the shortage of building materials, in Slovakia Gypsies were rehoused at a slightly higher rate than non-Gypsies both in state flats and family houses. Figures for the East Slovakia Region show a much lower rate for family houses perhaps because of LNC opposition but care is needed in interpretation for these figures are for a much earlier period.

The generally poorer health of Gypsies, revealed by figures from the Spišská Nová Ves district,\* was equally true of Gypsies in Slovakia and the East Slovakia Region. Whereas the infant mortality rate for the total population of Slovakia was 0.35%, for Gypsies in Slovakia it

---

\* Detailed statistics at district level on health and education have been omitted in this and the following chapter for the sake of brevity since they indicate similar differentials between the Gypsy and non-Gypsy populations as do the more general regional and national statistics.



Basic amenities in Gypsy settlements

|                 | Total houses in G. settlements | Wells in G. settlements |          | Toilets in G.settlements |          | % of G. houses |                |      | Total Gypsy pop. | No. of Gypsies per adequate |            |          |            |       |        |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------|--------------------------|----------|----------------|----------------|------|------------------|-----------------------------|------------|----------|------------|-------|--------|
|                 |                                | Total                   | of which | Total                    | of which | with adequate  | with no toilet | well |                  | toilet                      |            |          |            |       |        |
|                 |                                |                         |          |                          |          |                |                |      | adequate         |                             | inadequate | adequate | inadequate | water | toilet |
|                 |                                |                         |          |                          |          |                |                |      |                  |                             |            |          |            |       |        |
| (21)E.Slov.Reg. | 8,094                          | 846                     | 191      | 655                      | 2001     | 222            | 1779           | 2.3% | 2.7%             | 75%                         | 55,656     | 291      | 251        |       |        |
| (10) Slovakia   |                                |                         |          |                          |          |                |                |      |                  |                             |            | 96       | 72         |       |        |

Comparative rehousing rates - Gypsies and non-Gypsies.

| Period            | Figures for                            | Total state flats alloc. | % of state flats | % of pop. rec'd flats | Annual rate (state flats) | Co-op flats alloc. | Family houses built | % of pop. rec'd fam. house | Annual rate (fam.houses) |
|-------------------|--|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| (10) 1.63 to 9.64 | -all Slov.pop.-all Gypsies in Slovakia | 13,808<br>727            | -<br>5%          | 0.33%<br>0.48%        | 0.2%<br>0.29%             | -<br>69            | -<br>1,343          | 0.79%<br>0.94%             | 0.47%<br>0.56%           |
| (20) 1960-61      | -All Gypsies in E.Slov. Reg.           | 371                      | -                | -                     | 0.28%                     | -                  | 302                 | -                          | 0.23%                    |

was double at 0.71% (10) and while Gypsies in the East Slovakia Region only accounted for 12.2% of live births, their proportion of infant mortality was 61.4%. (21).

Similarly although 3.8% of the total population of Slovakia drew invalid pensions, the percentage for Gypsies in Slovakia was 5.4% and of Gypsies of productive age 11.2%. (10).

The incidence of TB was also much higher for Gypsies and was not limited to adults, although the high figure for Gypsy children in all Slovakia was very dubious. Particularly interesting was the much higher rate (1%) for the East Slovak Region as a whole, indicating the relative backwardness of this area of Slovakia.

Comparison of TB incidence - Gypsies and non-Gypsies. (21).

|             | % of total pop. with TB. | % of Gypsies with TB | No. of Gypsies with TB | Of which under 15 years old |      | Proportion of Gypsies of |                          |
|-------------|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|             |                          |                      |                        | No.                         | %    | All TB cases             | TB cases under 15 years. |
| Slovakia    | 0.15%                    | 2.4%                 | 3550                   | 1500?                       | 42.8 | -                        | -                        |
| E.Slov.Reg. | 1.0%                     | 2.5%                 | 1796                   | 400                         | 22.2 | 16%                      | 20%                      |

Finally the education situation was comparable. Very few Gypsy children were left in nurseries or attended nursery schools compared with non-Gypsies.

Comparative use of pre-school facilities - Gypsies  
and non-Gypsies.

|                  |                           | Total no.<br>children<br>(0-15) | of which in nursery |      | of which in<br>nursery school |     |
|------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|------|-------------------------------|-----|
|                  |                           |                                 | No.                 | %    | No.                           | %   |
| (Facts:<br>128 ) | All ČSSR                  | 3,560,000 <sup>Ⓜ</sup>          | 65,000              | 1.8  | 345,000                       | 9.7 |
| (21)             | Gypsies in<br>E.Slov.Reg. | 28,990                          | 19                  | 0.06 | 409                           | 1.4 |

<sup>Ⓜ</sup> estimate from 1964 pop. figure (Facts).

Attendance at ENS\* gradually improved and corresponded to the Spišská Nová Ves district's experience.

Improvement in BNS school attendance (East Slovak Region).

|      | Date     | Total No.<br>Gypsy<br>children | Of which of<br>school age | Regularly attend |        | Attend rarely<br>or not at all |        |
|------|----------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|--------|--------------------------------|--------|
|      |          |                                |                           | No.              | %      | No.                            | %      |
| (16) | 12.11.58 | -                              | -                         | -                | 50-60% | -                              | 40-50% |
| (21) | 1964     | 28,990                         | 17,967                    | 11,328           | 63%    | 2,775                          | 37%    |

Attainment was disappointing and despite the preferentially low entrance requirements, Gypsies in the 15 to 17 year age group accounted for only 2% of all East Slovakia Region apprenticeships although forming 5.3% of this age group. Only 30% to 50% of Gypsies enrolled as apprentices completed their training. (21).

---

\* Basic Nine-Year School - the standard school in Czechoslovakia providing compulsory primary and secondary education to children between the ages of six and fifteen.



A total of 10,224 Gypsy illiterates and semi-literates was claimed for the East Slovakia Region in 1964 (i.e. 25 % of adult Gypsies) but it is difficult to evaluate this.

In assessing the various reasons for the slow rate of progress both the Slovak Planning Commission and the East Slovakia RNC came to similar general conclusions to those of the Spišská Nová Ves DNC, explaining the stagnation by NC apathy and opposition but also by lack of resources.

The East Slovakia RNC sharply condemned NC shortcomings, occasionally attributing them to misunderstandings about the non-executive role of the advisory committees for Gypsy affairs.

General apathy appeared widespread and:-

until now practically not a single task of the advisory committees attached to the RNC or DNCs has been completed. Committees met only from time to time and members....from various departments did not take... [them] sufficiently seriously. (20)

But also important was blatant and fully-conscious administrative sabotage especially in the field of accommodation.

Not only individuals, who as owners of building plots refuse to sell them to NCs as soon as they learn that they are for Gypsies, but also officials ....hinder this work. We have very few cases in the region where LNCs have managed to obtain building plots for citizens of gypsy origin. We have dozens of villages in the region where the officials have no interest in solving this problem or only solve it under pressure from DNCs and the East Slovakia RNC... [14 villages named]. One LNC president...resigned his position and refused to solve this problem on principle....

As the LNC refuses to allocate him a building plot or deliberately drags out the procedure, the citizen of gypsy origin is then forced to build in the settlement. This is also proved by the fact that even though we have demolished 600 huts in the region since 1962, the number of unsuitable huts has not basically decreased with the exception of completely demolished settlements. (22)

As had the Spišská Nová Ves DNC, the East Slovakia RNC suggested "considering it a breach of state discipline when LNC officials do not want to allocate building plots to gypsies", but likewise no action was apparently taken.

There was an important difference of stress however in assessing the importance of the other main factor - lack of resources.

The East Slovakia RNC sometimes tended to see the limited resources employed in solving the problem as yet another instance of NC opposition.

Even DNCs do not consider...work among the population of gypsy origin as an indivisible part of NCs' [responsibilities] and this is shown...by their repeated demands for extra funds, as if the solution of these questions were not a part of the work and budget of the whole district. (20)

This was of course the same approach as in the 1959 government manual but it is a little strange to find it fully endorsed by the region with 40% of the country's Gypsies.

The Slovak Planning Commission, on the other hand, saw the lack of resources as an independent factor which both limited the possibility of NCs to act and undermined their morale. In solving the problem "the initial elan soon weakened however, especially when there were no funds for solving the problems". (10). The Commission warned that "if these funds are not provided and the solution of the problem is postponed, this will mean not only a further increase in the problem in the very near future but much higher costs". (10).

But perhaps a more fundamental lack, recognised by all levels of local authority in Slovakia, was the basic disparity between labour supply and demand. The basis of the solution had always been

to employ Gypsies, in this way giving them the means to help themselves. Local authorities could then provide additional assistance, especially with accommodation, and gradually the whole complex of cultural - educational problems would presumably dissolve.

Many [ gypsy ] families do not have the financial preconditions to solve their backwardness. For this reason employment and by this the raising of incomes of gypsy families, must be understood as the basic precondition for solving their accommodation, social and hygiene problems. (20)

Yet often the areas with the largest numbers of Gypsies had quite inadequate employment opportunities for them. A 1963 East Slovakia Region report stated:

Following...calculations, as a result of the lack of jobs in our region, it will be necessary to find employment outside our region for 3,823 persons, [ i.e. 13.2% of Gypsies of productive age ] which means transferring 14,000 persons from the region. (19).

#### A PROPOSED SOLUTION : POPULATION TRANSFERS

This strategy of spreading the burden was to become the basis of official policy for its subsequent phase.

In fact the agreed transfer of Gypsies from one district or region to another when there were insufficient jobs was envisaged in the 1959 directives and had been practised on a small scale throughout the early 1960s, especially from the East Slovakia Region to the Czech lands. For example the Spišská Nová Ves DNC had eventually abandoned its earlier resistance, reporting in 1964 that "the DNC...arranges the transfer of five to seven gypsy families annually to the Czech regions". (43).



Although complete families were sometimes transferred, in most cases only heads of families were involved and on a temporary basis. Now increased efforts were to be made to ensure that whole families were transferred permanently.

With regard to the limited jobs.... [in 6 named districts including Spišská Nová Ves] in relation to the number of fellow citizens of gypsy origin, it is necessary to make transfers within districts of the region and outside the region by agreement with the Central Office of NCs to the West and Central Bohemia and the North and South Moravia Regions so that these regions and their firms do not accept only workers, as they have done until now, but whole families and that they...provide them with accommodation and by this means realise the dispersal of citizens of gypsy origin and settlements. (20)

In 1963 the East Slovakia RNC had also calculated the long-term rehousing capacity for the next five-year plan until 1970 and increased the proportion of state flats to be allocated to Gypsies to 9.9%, although the improbability of this was conceded in the qualification "at least 5% for gypsies" (19). In contrast to this was the drop in planned private houses "possible without state aid". The Slovak Planning Commission's target of 6% was more cautious (or realistic), being only slightly above the rate already achieved. (10).

Planned rehousing of Gypsies 1965-70 (E.Slovak Reg.) (19).

| Planning Period | Total planned state flats | Of which to be alloc.to Gypsies |     | % of Gypsy pop. to receive state flat |          | Planned family houses for Gypsies | % of Gypsy pop. to receive family house |          |
|-----------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|---|----------|
|                 |                           | No.                             | %   | Total %                               | Annual % |                                   | Total %                                 | Annual % |
| 1965-70         | 20,018                    | 2,000                           | 9.9 | 2.65                                  | 0.53     | 650                               | 0.98                                    | 0.19     |

Yet even if these fairly optimistic plans could be realised the number of new houses and flats built by 1970 would still only be slightly more than half of the number of houses assessed as "dangerous to life" in the East Slovakia Region in 1964. Taking into consideration

the expected population growth during the planning period it could be seen that the planned rehousing rate would barely keep up with the emergence of new Gypsy families (as happened in the period January 1963 to September 1964 in Slovakia) or would even fall behind it in the East Slovakia Region and the accommodation problem would increase.

The effect of Gypsy population growth on rehousing rates

|      | Period                  | Reality/plan area | Total houses alloc. to Gypsies @ | Annual rate | New Gypsy families per year | Net Gypsy families rehoused per year |
|------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| (10) | Jan. 1963 to Sept. 1964 | Reality Slovakia  | 2,139                            | 1,284       | 1,000 to 1,100              | + 284                                |
| (19) | 1965 to 70.             | Plans E.Slov.Reg. | 2,650                            | 530         | 545*                        | - 15                                 |

\* estimate based on proportion of total new Gypsy families for all Slovakia.

@ Includes state flats and family houses.

The problem appeared insoluble unless large-scale population transfers were resorted to. A 1963 East Slovakia RNC document showed the attractions of such a policy. This piece of optimistic arithmetic from 1963 was only one of several however and is given as an example to show how different the problem could appear. No account was taken of rehousing Gypsies in co-op or works flats or of returning migrants in this particular calculation.

Planned transfers as a solution to the Gypsy accommodationproblem (1965-70 East Slovak Region). (19)

| Gypsies nec.<br>to employ.<br>outside<br>E.Slov.Reg. | Involving<br>transfer<br>of persons | Freeing<br>houses for<br>improvement | Planned<br>alloc.of<br>houses to<br>Gypsies | Tot.houses<br>to be<br>demolished | Houses<br>available<br>for new<br>Gypsy fams. |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| 3,823  | 14,000 cca.                         | 2,000                                | 2,650                                       | 3,130                             | 1,520   |

On past experience it was clear that the accommodation problem could be eased in such a dramatic way only if there was a complete change of heart by many NC officials or alternatively far more efficient means of ensuring "state discipline". Neither seemed very likely.

There were several proposals, however, to adopt fixed housing quotas for Gypsies, rather than leaving this to the discretion of LNCs and DNCs, which would at least make disobedience more easily detectable. "It will be necessary to take strict measures that... in each block one or two flats will be compulsorily allocated to fellow citizens of gypsy origin and likewise....compulsorily with works". (20). Similarly: "From experience....it is evident that this problem [of NCs refusing to allocate building plots to Gypsies] can only be solved by obtaining building plots in bulk for all applicants". (22).

To what extent RNC officials thought they could transform the situation by transfers varied from report to report. In the 1964 East Slovakia RNC report (21) such transfers were seen more as valuable help rather than a panacea and the plans for 1965 to 1970



were correspondingly less grandiose, with only 6,000 to 6,500 persons to be transferred in contrast to the previous plan of around 14,000. (19). This change of emphasis entailed a correspondingly greater pressure on the region's own rehousing programme.

Apart from greatly increased transfers the accommodation problem was to be solved more or less as before with poorer Gypsies rehoused in state flats and regularly working, stabler Gypsies in co-op flats or family houses. To assist family house building it was proposed to exempt Gypsies from the costs of building plots, plans and documentation and to facilitate interest-free state loans.

Proposed measures in other fields often had a familiar ring. Adequate drinking water and sanitation facilities were to be provided for settlements without them. There were to be regular injections and medical check-ups and to help spread health education, courses were to be organised and Gypsy girls were to be trained as auxiliary nurses. Four new childrens' homes were to be built with a capacity of 370 places.

In the field of education a target of 50% of all Gypsy children were to attend nursery school and at BNS special classes for Gypsies were to be continued. In addition four special research classes were to be established including one in the town of Spišská Nová Ves. To encourage regular school attendance family allowances were to be withheld in cases of persistent non-attendance, although this was only made possible legally in 1966.

At work educationally backward Gypsies were to have four hours of lessons daily during working hours on full pay, for which firms were to be compensated. In general campaigns were to be organised

with the help of the trade union and youth movements to increase Gypsies' work qualifications.

In the field of crime it was recommended that officials "seek out criminal acts of sexual abuse and devote special care to the punishable activity of migrancy in the sense of Law 74/1958 Sb". (21)

Budgetary plans for the 1965-70 period were impressive but difficult to evaluate since they often showed only that part specifically devoted to Gypsies, while not including such major items as state flat construction for Gypsies (which amounted to 73 million crowns for the East Slovakia Region (21)), since this was an integral part of the general budget. The estimated 1965-70 budget for solving the 'Gypsy question' in Slovakia was 200 million crowns of which nursery schools and child-minding facilities accounted for over half with 120 million, purchase of huts 52 million, wells and toilets 7 million and bonuses for teachers 21 million crowns. (10).

For the year 1965 although the bulk of the funds still had to be drawn from DNC resources, the East Slovakia RNC provided help in a number of ways. It created a reserve fund of over two and a half million crowns for improving amenities in settlements (such as toilets, wells, roads and lighting) to be utilised when DNC funds were exhausted and covered DNC purchases of huts (over two million crowns) as well as making available over one and a half million crowns within Campaign 'Z' for 'beautifying the surroundings'. In addition the East Slovak Steelworks at Košice provided almost half a million crowns for the elimination of the nearby Bukovec settlement, which was feared to be endangering the health of workers. (22).

AN ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS SINCE 1958

It is all too easy to become so immersed in the detail of official reports, preoccupied with specific aspects of local authority performance, that the wider aspects are forgotten. For example the ultimate goal of assimilation was rarely mentioned in NC documents which instead listed the minutiae of hut demolitions, building permits and so on, i.e. the mechanism by which dispersal and hence assimilation was to be achieved. For this reason it would be helpful to restate the central features of the 1958 policy and, without launching into a fuller analysis at this intermediate stage, to summarise the reasons for the policy's limited progress.

For the assimilation policy to be a success three main aims had to be achieved:

- i) Gypsies had to be integrated into the labour force as this would provide both an economic base for a higher standard of living and the most effective re-educative influence.
- ii) Gypsy population concentrations had to be dispersed to prevent 'the perpetuation of the previous backward way of life' and to allow Gypsies to come into contact with new, progressive living patterns.
- iii) In order that re-education by work should be completed successfully and that the dispersal of Gypsies should not be thwarted, control had to be established over natural migration.

Six years later the Slovakian reports confirmed what was already evident - significant progress had been made towards the first aim alone; elsewhere the results had been negligible.



One major reason why the attempt failed to control Gypsy migration by means of Law 74 and the nomads' register was that it conflicted with the labour requirements of the economy ; with the interests of Slovakian rural employers, eager to restrict or shed their Gypsy workforce; of Czech industrial employers, desperate for any additional labour power and, not least, of Gypsies in search of high wages.

Local authorities possessed sufficient powers to make deep inroads into the migratory flow, if not to halt it entirely, for they could have insisted that employers complied with the regulations and simply intimidated the Gypsies into obedience. Instead they preferred to include only a relatively small proportion of Gypsies on the nomads' register initially and thereafter to reduce their numbers, turning a blind eye to continued migration in the meantime.

This was not entirely straightforward defiance of central government policy because local authorities were, in fact, receiving contradictory instructions. On the one hand new regulations required them to eradicate 'nomadism' but at the same time there were familiar, incessant demands for higher production levels which could only be met by allowing the remaining untapped labour reserves to gravitate to the industrial centres where they were most needed.

Paradoxically, therefore, the greatest success of the 1958 policy in this initial period - the dramatically improving proportion of Gypsies in regular work - was largely due to local authority unwillingness to make use of their powers to control natural migration, thus allowing fundamental economic requirements to override the ill-considered and unrealistic plan to provide local employment

for the overwhelming numbers of Gypsies still living in Slovakia.

This is to put a charitable interpretation on the action of local authorities and some, as their reports make clear, did reason in this way. These were almost certainly in the minority; the majority did as little as possible to implement a policy in which they had no real interest. This is especially true of local dispersal of Gypsy concentrations. Apart from occasional mutterings about sanctions, which never seemed to materialise, they took the line of least resistance after the early discovery that their shortcomings went undetected - or at least unpunished.

Given the rigidly hierarchical administrative structure in Czechoslovakia, it is puzzling that local authorities were so immune from discipline. As was shown in the section on government organisation local authorities faced in two directions for although they represented local interests - including those of local employers - they were ultimately subordinate to central government by the principle of democratic centralism. Any conflict of interests should have been swiftly resolved in favour of central policy, especially so after the Stalinist leadership had tightened its grip, treating government and local authorities alike as 'levers of a transmission system' (Selucký) and not as decision-making bodies in their own right. But at the same time that rigid 'dirigisme' reached its height, there occurred the greatest collapse of central planning and control yet experienced in Czechoslovakia.

The Third Five-Year Plan, which was to run from 1961 through 1965, had to be abandoned in 1962.... It was the most elaborate plan yet drawn up...yet, within a comparatively short time,...it became evident that it could never be carried to completion.

In a way it was, to put it bluntly, a vast exercise in bureaucratic self-deception.

(Wheeler : 58,59).

Compared to this traumatic blow to the prestige and confidence of the Novotnýite leadership, which seriously weakened it politically and eventually led to its downfall six years later, the contemporaneous failure of its Gypsy policy was a drop in the ocean; it was perhaps remarkable that it was noticed at all.

Meanwhile the painful lesson that was being learnt at this time by planners in the broader sphere of the economy - that the breakdown of grandiose and unworkable plans necessitated a radical rethinking of fundamentals - had not yet permeated to the peripheral area of Gypsy policy by 1965. There, the response to failure was still the instinctive dirigiste reaction; to intensify the policy that had foundered by redoubling the detail of the plans and compounding the bureaucracy to administer them. If the economic planners were tentatively approaching the renaissance of 1968, those in charge of Gypsy policy were still immersed in the Dark Ages of the late 1950s. Instead of re-examining the assumptions of 1958, the policy-makers simply reaffirmed the previous aims and added a fourth:

- iv) Effective central control over local authorities to ensure that they carried out their duties properly.



CHAPTER FIVEPageTHE BREAKDOWN OF THE ASSIMILATION POLICY (1965-1968)

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| THE 1965 MEASURES - 'DISPERSAL AND TRANSFER' ... ..                                      | 250 |
| Government Decree No.502/1965 ... ..   | 250 |
| 'Main Directions in Solving Questions of the Gypsy<br>Population' ... ..                 | 254 |
| 'Principles for Organising the Dispersal and<br>Transfer of the Gypsy Population' ... .. | 264 |
| Law 117/1966 ... ..  | 268 |
| Freedom of Movement and the Gypsies ... ..   | 269 |
| THE COLLAPSE OF THE DISPERSAL AND TRANSFER PROGRAMME<br>AND ITS CAUSES ... ..            | 274 |
| The Plan ... ..  | 274 |
| Gypsy Population Movement - Planned and Unplanned ...                                    | 277 |
| The Housing Shortage and its Effects ... ..  | 298 |
| Changing Employment Patterns and Migration ... ..  | 309 |
| The Failure of the New Administrative Structure ...                                      | 318 |
| The Results ... ..   | 330 |
| AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE 1965 MEASURES...                               | 341 |

CHAPTER FIVETHE BREAKDOWN OF THE ASSIMILATION POLICY (1965-1968)THE 1965 MEASURES - 'DISPERSAL AND TRANSFER'Government Decree No. 502/1965

In a 'justifying report' attached to Decree 502, there was a brief review of the national situation which recognised that many of the problems discussed in the previous chapter, mainly in relation to Slovakia, were indeed widespread throughout the Republic.

The problem of employment showed the most improvement but "the required elimination of gypsy concentrations - streets and town quarters in the Czech regions and settlements in Slovakia-proceeded very slowly". (82). Health and school attendance remained serious problems and the alleged indifference of officials to Gypsy crime - ("mainly parasitism, dealing and fighting" (82)) - was said to be the cause of growing public hostility towards Gypsies. Meanwhile the population explosion continued unchecked and the Gypsies' numbers were expected to increase from the 1965 estimate of between 180,000 and 200,000 to around 300,000 by 1970.

The pre-condition of effective dispersal - control over spontaneous population movement - had been only a partial success for while nomadism with horses and carts had been eliminated, the migration rate remained high. The report moved towards a clearer differentiation between the two quite distinct types of movement and in some ways the scheme to transfer Gypsies from Slovakia to the Czech lands was an acknowledgement of the inadequacy of previous assumptions that the majority of unemployed Gypsies in Slovakia could be absorbed locally.

Some Czech regions will have to help Slovak regions where there is the greatest concentration of the gypsy population, above all in providing permanent employment and accommodation for a number of gypsy citizens. (82).

However the imbalances in the labour market were regarded as less important a factor than administrative deficiency. For instance the sparing use of Law 74 was blamed on "several provisions of Law 74...which do not suit present-day conditions (e.g. a pre-condition for prosecution is proof that NCs helped to provide suitable employment, accommodation and systematic education)". (82). In other words the law was inoperable because local authorities had defaulted on their statutory responsibilities to give help. Here the implication was not that there should have been funds available and firmer supervision of NCs but that the law should have been designed for use against migration, irrespective of whether NCs had been either capable or willing to play their part in the bargain by providing suitable jobs and housing.

Overall, the disappointing progress in assimilating Gypsies was attributed chiefly to an inadequate administrative structure, especially in the Czech lands where the practice had been to set up advisory committees in DNC and RNC departments of education, loosely co-ordinated by the Ministry of Education and Culture. "Their recommendations were not observed by other NC departments, especially planning and finance". (82). In consequence the Ministry's "Central Committee for Work with Citizens of Gypsy Origin" had ceased to function in 1962, following a recommendation in a CP Central Committee report that a government committee should be set up for overall co-ordination.



Likewise the improved results in Slovakia during 1964 and 1965 were believed to be the result of administrative changes and consequently Czech NCs were directed to "make use of the experience of Slovakia in setting up committees with sufficient authority and overall control". (82) Instead of including their advisory committees in NC education departments, the Slovaks had attached them directly to RNC and DNC councils and had styled the full-time secretaries of such committees 'plenipotentiaries for work among the gypsy population'.

This form of administrative solution was seen as particularly urgent for the North Bohemia Region "where there is the greatest concentration of gypsy citizens in the Czech regions yet in practice no-one is concerned with the problem" (82).

The Government Decree No. 502/1965 (80) was important not so much for any detailed new measures contained in it but because it transformed the whole administrative organisation to solve the 'gypsy problem' by bringing it for the first time on the 13th of October, 1965 under one overall national co-ordinating body - the 'Government Committee for Questions of the Gypsy Population'.

The Government Committee was to be "an advisory, initiating and co-ordinating body" concentrating "above all on questions of the regular employment of gypsy citizens and raising their living and cultural standards" (84) and its main activities were:

- (a) to co-ordinate and monitor the overall solution of questions of the gypsy population,
  - giving proposals where required on their solution to central bodies, social organisations and RNCs.
  - warning about shortcomings that had been discovered...
  - controlling how basic directives were being followed....,
  - keeping the government informed and recommending to it measures when required.....,

- (b) to work out basic party and government decrees and directives;
- (c) to co-ordinate important campaigns...particularly the organised transfer and dispersal of part of the gypsy population from Slovakia to the Czech regions;
- (d) to work out the principles and a national timetable for eliminating undesirable gypsy suburbs and concentrations, including the financial and material requirements, and ensuring its implementation;
- (e) to discuss plans and proposals of central offices, bodies and social organisations, RNC councils.... and to present its own proposals for improving... their plans;
- (f) to control the effective use made of financial and material resources provided in the state plan and budget....,
- (g) to evaluate proposals for laws and directives amending the solution of questions of the gypsy population. (84)

To enable it to perform such wide-ranging tasks, the Government Committee was to be chaired by a vice-chairman of the Slovak National Council and was to include among its nineteen members important officials from such bodies as the State Planning Committee, the Ministries of Finance, Education and Culture, Health, the Interior and Justice, from the Public Prosecutor's office, the trade Unions, the Youth movement and various NCs. To perform the administrative tasks of the Government Committee a special section was to be created as part of the Government Praesidium's department for NCs.

Shortly afterwards (on 3.1.66), a parallel advisory committee was created by Slovak National Council Decree No.5 to co-ordinate the administrative system in Slovakia.

In addition to specifying the composition, status and activities of the Government Committee, Government Decree 502 also set a number

of tasks for other bodies. Some of these were more or less instructions to continue along previous lines as in the field of employment and education, but others were related to new measures, in particular to the 'dispersal and transfer' policy.

The procedure was to be that RNCs and DNCs were to prepare both long-term and annual timetables, for eliminating Gypsy concentrations together with the associated financial and material requirements. These proposals were then to be discussed and agreed with the Government Committee and presented to the State Planning Committee and Ministry of Finance in the form of a plan, so that the necessary resources would be provided by the state plan and budget.

To find a legal means of stopping Gypsy migration, the Ministries of Justice and the Interior were to analyse the operation of Law 74 and prepare quickly a proposal for amending it, "so that its effectiveness would be ensured in contemporary conditions". (80).

In addition the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences was directed to undertake sociological research presenting its conclusions to the government by the end of 1968.

'Main Directions in Solving Questions of the Gypsy Population' (85)

Government Decree 502 had set up the new administrative organisation for solving the 'Gypsy Question' in October 1965 but it was the 'Main Directions' document on the 18th December 1965 which reaffirmed that despite administrative changes the complete assimilation of the Gypsy minority, as declared in 1958, was still



the fundamental policy aim. This document was an extract from the first report of the new Government Committee.

Much of the document's opening review of the development of the 'gypsy problem' since 1958 was more a re-discovery of old truths rather than a display of fresh insight.

Although some successes were claimed - (nomadism and employment) - "the gypsy question is deteriorating and the dispersal, which is one of the fundamental preconditions of the assimilation of the gypsy population, is left to natural development. Virtually no progress is being made in the elimination of gypsy settlements, quarters and streets". (85). The main reasons given for this failure - lack of funds and administrative faults - were those given by the East Slovakia RNC and the Slovak Planning Commission a year or two before, although their formulation by the Government Committee was more sophisticated.

The problem had been initially analysed as of socio-economic origin and it was failure to observe the implications that had led to such disappointing results, for "when the plans of regions and districts for solving the gypsy question were not backed up by financial and material resources they became [nothing more than] declarations of intent". (85).

Similarly the allocation of the co-ordinating role to the Ministry of Education and Culture was due to this misunderstanding:

The centre of gravity of work passed to the NC advisory committees, which...concentrated mainly on tasks of cultural education. One of the causes was that the solution of the gypsy question was not tackled by inter-department co-operation at NCs or at central bodies...and the solution of the entire problem remained with the committee at the Ministry of Education and Culture. (85)

Even the slow rate of improvement in Gypsy school attendance and performance was attributed to this same basic misunderstanding. Experience "confirms that school attendance and performance cannot be separated from the surroundings in which the children live. Insufficient regard for this relationship is the cause of why the results achieved in education at school and in eliminating illiteracy do not correspond to the efforts made". (85)

It is important that this failure in understanding was admitted to have occurred at governmental level and had resulted in the establishment of an inadequate administrative structure. Even had the main executive agents, the NCs, been determined to follow the 1959 directives to the best of their ability, they would have been severely handicapped by the lack of special funds and possibly even more so by the inevitable inter-departmental rivalry arising from a situation where, acting on the advice of its advisory committee for Gypsy affairs, the department of education would try to direct its fellow and equal NC departments. This last difficulty had already been avoided by many NCs in Slovakia however.

Another structural weakness, partially stemming from the same cause, was the inability of central government or even RNCs to control their subordinate NCs.

Some NCs appeared to be strongly in favour of assimilation.

RNC and DNC officials fully understand the need for a planned and differentiated dispersal of the gypsy population but also justifiably demand that in performing this task, they should have the help of all central bodies and firms, so that in so far as these are able, they will create the strictest conditions for assimilating the gypsy population. (85).

But even if these declarations are accepted at face-value, such NCs were vastly outnumbered by those outrightly hostile, especially at LNC level.

The negative aspects of the gypsy way of life had led some officials to believe that gypsies will never be assimilated and that they should be dealt with by purely punitive administrative measures such as expulsion from towns, forced labour, removal of children, imprisonment, etc.

(85)

This NC opposition was often fully shared by constituents.

The attitude of other people towards Gypsies is a serious problem. In many places prejudice is shown towards gypsies which often borders on racial discrimination. It is manifested in the exclusion [of gypsies] from public and social life in town and village [and] in the isolation of young people from young gypsies.... (85)

Yet realisation of this relatively serious situation was not to lead to an abandonment of the policy of assimilation by dispersal at this stage, but, on the contrary, to redoubled efforts utilising an improved administrative structure and increased resources.\* The

---

\* Ulč drew a sharp distinction between the 1958-1965 period (which he characterised as "wrong policy") and the 1965-1968 period ("some policy"), mistakenly believing that the 1965 measures reversed those of 1958.

It was conceded [in 1965] that the previous policies had failed 'in toto' .... Finally, after 20 years, the malady was recognised as a socio-economic one, to be coped with primarily by economic measures, and supplemented, but not substituted, by public enlightenment. The new program put stress on two tasks : full employment of able-bodied Gypsies as the pre-condition of a decent living standard; and liquidation of Gypsy hamlets and dispersal (rozptyl) of these people throughout Czechoslovakia. (Ulč : 431)

Although it is true that the 1958 policy was eventually reversed, this occurred only in 1968 and not in 1965. None of the 1958 policy aims were in any way questioned in 1965 and indeed the innovatory measures of that year (the planned dispersal programme, the prevention of unplanned migration, the provision of special funds

Cont/...



conceptual structure of 1958 remained intact and even the value of classifying Gypsies into groups was re-iterated as the basis for deciding eligibility for dispersal.

At first sight these groups appear rather different from those described in 1958 as 'settled, semi-nomadic and nomadic gypsies' for the 1965 groups were declared to have no connection with the origin of the gypsies.

It is not a matter therefore of categorising by origin or on the basis of whether the gypsies in question are settled or non-settled but according to their connection to the production process, the level of their education and culture in the widest sense of the word. (85)

The difference between 1958 and 1965 is less striking when it is remembered that the awkward 1958 categorisation by degrees of 'nomadism' was ambiguous and, as was shown in the previous chapter, depended in practice more on an assessment of general living standards than evidence of actual movement. Likewise it is difficult to evaluate to what extent the terminological shift in 1965 from 'nomadism' to 'migration' represented a clearer understanding of the nature of Gypsy population movement.

In 1958 the concept of 'nomadism' was stretched to cover what was identified as 'traditional' nomadism as well as the very different patterns of movement of settlement Gypsies. No doubt this was partly for legal convenience but it was also the expression of a

---

Cont/..

from the central exchequer and the overall co-ordination of the policy by a permanent government committee) were all designed to achieve the 1958 policy aims in a more systematic fashion.

strongly-held belief that the newer movement was really a resurgence of the Gypsies' legendary nomadic urge. The ending of 'traditional' nomadism in 1959 led policy-makers to concentrate their whole attention on the less controllable movement of settlement Gypsies and in 1965 this was almost acknowledged as a case of rural-to-urban migration\* - albeit with qualifications.

The departure of the population to industrial centres is an objective process. With the gypsy population however it is necessary to take into consideration the special conditions of their former life: a different way of living to other people, uncivilised living conditions, large families, illness and illiteracy. These realities are often forgotten and firms, NCs and the inhabitants of the Czech regions are not adequately prepared for them. (85)

Yet the systematic replacement of the term 'nomadism' by 'migration' after 1965 did not signify any renunciation of the previous belief that this movement was nevertheless motivated in a similar and uniquely Gypsy way. Official reports, particularly in 1967, 1971 and 1975, persisted in trying to explain continued Gypsy movement as 'inherent nomadism'. That no lasting improvement in comprehension had occurred is especially evident from the important 1967 Government Committee report which reviewed progress to date.

As the result of applying [the original law 74] the typical forms of nomadism with horse and cart have been virtually eliminated...however, only a minority of [these nomads] were successfully

---

\* Occasionally this concept had been expressed before but always in a subordinate capacity rather than as a central explanation, (e.g. in the 1959 manual and also in a 1965 Spišská Nová Ves report which conceded that the "semi-nomadic life...and relatively great movement of gypsy citizens has its roots in the years 1945 to 1950 when many...went to work in the Czech lands". (63)

settled permanently and the remainder changed their form of nomadism. Basically this [now] consists of frequent changes of residence by means of public transport.

The majority of these [nomads] try (or at least pretend to try) to find work. They work with the minimum of effort and are content with low wages and family allowances, which are high as the result of a large number of children.

These forms of [nomadism] are typical today not only of a significant number of registered nomads but also of a wide circle of other gypsies, yet they cannot be prevented by law 74. (94).

On the whole, therefore, the terminological changes were less significant than they appeared. The 1965 formulations were able to clarify the implicit criteria of 1958 since they openly dealt with Gypsies alone and focussed on the main problem of migration instead of having to straddle uneasily the two distinct types of Gypsy movement. But, like their predecessors, they also embodied the same fundamental confusion about nomadism.

Whereas the 1958 categorisation had the difficult task of facing both ways for legalistic reasons - backwards to origins and forwards to aspirations - its 1965 counterpart could concentrate entirely on attained standard of living as a measure of Gypsy aspirations. It had been noticed long before 1958 that the:

way of life of our [socialist] society has an objective effect and accelerates the differentiation process amongst Gypsies themselves. However, it must be said that this objectively operating factor has not been sufficiently utilised and . . . so this differentiation process continued more or less uncontrolled. It is necessary to catch hold of this process at a definite moment, to abstract and express it by dividing gypsies into groups according to their stage of development and specify for each group the most effective form of solution. . . . The division and manner of solution should be made binding for all bodies and institutions and should become the basis for working out the plans of central bodies and NCs for solving the gypsy question. (85).



Although it was freely admitted that individual Gypsies could be reclassified from one group to another, this approach revealed a new firmness which was characteristic of the 1965 measures.

In the same way that the differentiation process was regarded as objective, so was its meaning objectively and unequivocally **stated** in terms of Gypsy aspirations to assimilation.

The first group in fact were of no official concern since they had "completely extricated themselves from gypsy surroundings [and] live the life of other citizens". They were only mentioned to show "the consummation of the differentiation process from the lowest level of development to the achievement of full assimilation". (85) [My emphasis].

To the second group belong those who no longer live in a gypsy concentration and who have already attained certain work qualifications, are settled among other [non-Gypsy] people and have bought or built their own family house... or obtained a state or co-op flat. Further they observe basic principles of hygiene, send their children more or less regularly to school and try to adapt to their surroundings in clothing, housekeeping etc.. However, they still need to strengthen these basic habits and principles and often need to learn to read and write, to acquire aesthetic principles of dress and furnishing, modern ways of living and nourishment.

It must be said that in this phase of development gypsies are very adaptive, often unintentionally adopting very swiftly some models, unfortunately not always good, that they see around them. It is this group which is separated by only the final step from full assimilation. (85) [My emphasis].

In the third group should be included those families or gypsies who already work although as yet have no work qualifications, who try to acquire a basic working routine, who try to gain regular employment, who try to acquire basic principles of hygiene and whose children are sent

more or less regularly to school. Many of these want to build or buy a house or try to obtain by means of their job a state or co-op flat. They are on the best road to get out of a gypsy environment. [My emphasis] (85).

In the fourth group should be included the most backward and most wretched part of the gypsy population. They live a typical gypsy life in a gypsy concentration [my emphasis] and as yet have no interest in leaving this concentration. If they work at all, they work irregularly; they do not send their children to school nor do they take much care of them and it cannot be said of them that they have attained any cultural level for they live in filth and from their numbers are recruited parasites and criminals. Among them are included many chronically ill or feeble people and pensioners who do not even want to be cured because their illness brings them an income without work. The solution of problems in assimilating gypsies from this group will be very demanding. (85)

Eligible for transfer were Gypsies of the second and third groups although since a condition of being classified in the second group was residence outside a 'gypsy concentration', the case of these Gypsies was not so urgent. The basic difference between the second and third groups was that members of the former had already achieved some of their basic aspirations while members of the latter were still striving.\*

Most promising of all for transfer and dispersal were Gypsies of the third group. "Families of this group are 'ripe' for planned dispersal and not only in Slovakia but to the Czech lands". NCs were

---

\* In fact the first group was not counted later and what are here the second, third and fourth groups became the first, second and third groups.

more or less regularly to school. Many of these want to build or buy a house or try to obtain by means of their job a state or co-op flat. They are on the best road to get out of a gypsy environment. [My emphasis] (85).

In the fourth group should be included the most backward and most wretched part of the gypsy population. They live a typical gypsy life in a gypsy concentration [my emphasis] and as yet have no interest in leaving this concentration. If they work at all, they work irregularly; they do not send their children to school nor do they take much care of them and it cannot be said of them that they have attained any cultural level for they live in filth and from their numbers are recruited parasites and criminals. Among them are included many chronically ill or feeble people and pensioners who do not even want to be cured because their illness brings them an income without work. The solution of problems in assimilating gypsies from this group will be very demanding. (85)

Eligible for transfer were Gypsies of the second and third groups although since a condition of being classified in the second group was residence outside a 'gypsy concentration', the case of these Gypsies was not so urgent. The basic difference between the second and third groups was that members of the former had already achieved some of their basic aspirations while members of the latter were still striving.\*

Most promising of all for transfer and dispersal were Gypsies of the third group. "Families of this group are 'ripe' for planned dispersal and not only in Slovakia but to the Czech lands". NCs were

---

\* In fact the first group was not counted later and what are here the second, third and fourth groups became the first, second and third groups.



to keep careful watch "so that we recognise in time whether that particular family has 'ripened' yet for dispersal and afterwards perform everything necessary so that the move can be made as soon as possible".

Criteria for selection for transfer and dispersal were that Gypsies should "have the basic preconditions [i.e. a certain standard of living] and should have already expressed their own interest in moving". In all "they must feel equally responsible for the successful progress of the assimilation process".

The recommended form of co-operation between Czech and Slovak NCs was not specified in detail in the 'Main Directions' document but the case of Poprad, a DNC of the East Slovakia Region, was cited as an example. Poprad had made working agreements with two Czech DNCs and had already successfully transferred some Gypsies of the third category. The Government Committee warned that once similar agreements had been concluded for "other districts in Slovakia to be considered for transfers to the Czech lands, any other transfers would have to be regarded as wandering and prosecuted as such". (85). The possibility was conceded that

in individual cases it will be necessary to take into consideration the possible wishes of a gypsy family which might want to settle for important reasons in some other place [than that with which their district has an agreement], but this must always be...with the agreement of both districts. (85)

The document 'Principles for Organising the Dispersal and Transfer of the Gypsy Population' (83) was to spell out such procedures in greater detail.

As for Gypsies of the fourth group, they were not to be transferred but left in their 'concentrations' for the time being. "At present it must be expected that individual settlements will not be eliminated immediately but gradually according to the possibilities of transferring or placing Gypsies and this in turn dependent on the resources which can be freed by the national economy for such matters" (85). Therefore measures would have to be taken to improve the fundamental amenities of such remaining settlements.

Gypsies of the fourth group were to be offered work but it was believed "necessary to proceed against them far more systematically and firmly than formerly" by acting against parasitism, theft and breaches of public order by severer judgements in the courts. The legal apparatus already existed for solving some major problems (e.g. to remove children to institutions when they are not cared for, to take chronically ill people into sanatoria or hospitals and to place pensioners in old people's homes) but the capacity of such institutions was insufficient.

Nevertheless it was hoped that "the gypsy problem could be finally solved in a historically short period or at least the perpetuation of the gypsy way of life stopped, especially...of gypsies [of the fourth] group". (85)

'Principles for Organising the Dispersal and Transfer of the Gypsy Population'. (83)

This document was intended particularly for NC use to specify in detail three of the key tasks set in Government Decree 502 - the

transfer of Gypsies from Slovakia to the Czech lands, the dispersal of Gypsies within their own district or region and the "adoption of effective measures to prevent un-organised, natural migration of gypsies to the Czech regions and back again". (83)

Some basic pre-conditions for undertaking any dispersal or transfer of Gypsies were initially stated:

- a) the dispersal and transfer of part of the gypsy population can only be organised on the basis of the voluntary agreement of the gypsy population;
- b) it cannot be undertaken without previously ensuring accommodation and employment for gypsy families and persons;
- c) gypsy huts and unhygienic dwellings can only be eliminated on the pre-condition that other more suitable accommodation is available for their occupants;
- d) a precise survey must be made of gypsy families (persons) to be dispersed or transferred from Slovakia to the Czech regions and further care must be ensured for them in their new surroundings so that it is possible to follow their process of re-education.
- e) NCs and social organisations must together create conditions so that other people [i.e. non-Gypsies] understand the dispersal and transfer;
- f) DNCs, MNCs and LNCs in the Czech regions and in Slovakia must ensure all conditions in a fully responsible way for transferring and dispersing part of the gypsy population.

(83)

(i) In carrying out transfers the Slovak RNCs and DNCs had the responsibility of selecting and preparing Gypsies from the second group (i.e. the third group of the 'Main Directions' document. See footnote above), while their Czech counterparts had the demanding task of finding suitable accommodation and employment as well as co-operating with the trade unions and social organisations in ensuring



the further education of transferred Gypsies. The previous practice of employing many Gypsies for seasonal work was discouraged and was only to be permitted in exceptional cases under DNC supervision to ensure both that school attendance was not interrupted and that the Gypsies returned to their original place of residence at the end of the contract period.

Numbers to be transferred were to be agreed between Slovak and Czech DNCs each year and included in the annual budget, but there were to be no transfers outside of these NC agreements for:

every unplanned, unorganised, unconfirmed transfer of a gypsy person or family should be considered by both districts as undesirable migration of gypsy persons and refused on principle. The person or district which arranged the transfer should be charged the costs of returning the gypsy person or family to the original place of residence. (83)

The Government Committee had recommended that transfers be organised between regions in the following way:

| <u>From (Slovakia)</u> | <u>To (Czech lands)</u>                          |
|------------------------|--|
| East Slovak Region     | North Moravia Region and<br>East Bohemia Region  |
| West Slovak Region     | Central Bohemia Region and<br>South Czech Region |
| Central Slovak Region  | South Moravia Region                             |

All but three Czech regions were to receive transferred Gypsies for "with regard to the considerable concentration of gypsy inhabitants in the West and North Bohemia Regions at present, the

transfer of gypsies from Slovakia to these regions is not recommended". Similarly the capital city, Prague, was not chosen as a transfer destination.

Together with their recommended regional partners, RNCs were to specify individual districts which would co-operate in organising transfers. However, it was recognised that some inter-district agreements had already been made (e.g. Poprad and its Czech partners) which might not correspond to the new overall plan, but to interrupt these would be administrative formalism and their continuance was recommended.

(ii) As for dispersal within region or district, "the same principles apply as in making transfers" but special priority was given to "eliminating gypsy settlements in areas frequented by foreign tourists (the High Tatras [Mountains national park]) and also to... Velká Ida in the health interests of workers at the East Slovak Steelworks". (83).

For both transfers and dispersal within region and district, DNCs were responsible for checking for TB, germ-carrying and trachoma and for disinfecting any furniture to be moved.

From 1967 onwards the main financial and material resources were to be provided as part of the state plan and budget but until then (and afterwards as well) the necessary funds were to be found in a number of ways.

Basically DNCs where Gypsies were originally resident were responsible for all expenses involved in sending Gypsies to their new place of residence (i.e. removal allowances, travel etc.), while

DNCs at the destination had to provide accommodation and any additional moving-in expenses. However, DNC funds could be supplemented by works and social organisation funds as well as by Gypsies' own savings or payments received on the purchase or demolition of their previous dwelling. In addition for "unexpected exceptional costs...an appropriate part of the government budget reserve [was to be]...allocated for solving questions of the gypsy population".

#### Law 117/1966

Law 117 "on some consequences of neglecting care of children" (93) was enacted on 15th December 1966 and was not strictly part of the 1965 measures to solve the Gypsy question. It also differed from those measures in being a general law of the republic, not mentioning Gypsies at all by name.

However, it can be justifiably considered with the 1965 measures for, like law 74/1958, it was intended primarily as a weapon for the use of NCs in controlling their Gypsy citizens.

Paragraphs two and three empowered NCs to withhold payment of family allowances in cases where the money was not being used for the intended purposes, particularly where "basic care of the children is neglected" (93) or where the children "do not attend school at all or are regularly absent" (93) without sufficient reason. The task of ensuring that the children still received the benefit of the allowances in such cases passed to NCs who were to spend the money on "school dinners, other nourishment, clothing, footwear" etc. (93).



Freedom of Movement and the Gypsies

Until 1965 Gypsies, as such, could move as freely around the country as any other citizens. This was true with the exception of those listed in the nomads' register who could move only with the prior agreement of both source and destination NCs. After the initial compilation of the register in 1959, additions could be made if local authorities decided that the imprecise criteria for 'nomadism' were satisfied and in this way all Gypsy population movement could be controlled - at least in theory.

In practice NCs proved unwilling to shoulder extra responsibilities and only amended the register by deletions. During this period even registered persons were probably able to move fairly freely since local authorities and employers alike frequently ignored the 1958 directives. Law 74 was rarely used since NCs were reluctant to bring their own performance under legal scrutiny.

At the same time as the recidivist, the state body (i.e. NC) was judged too, for it had to be established whether help had been offered to settle permanently (and in this way both [recidivist and NC] were punishable). (90)

To counteract this state of paralysis, the 1965 measures in effect extended the restrictions of 1958 from about 25 per cent of Gypsies ('registered nomads') to all Gypsies - whether they could be identified as 'nomads' or not - for the 'Principles for...Dispersal and Transfer' instructed NCs to resist all Gypsy movement on principle, unless specifically approved by them as part of the dispersal programme.

Leaving aside for the moment the problematic case of those said to be 'fully assimilated', all Gypsies were to be classified by NCs into three groups based on their way of life (level of assimilation). Those to be dispersed and transferred were to be chosen mainly from the second group, the plan being to cream off the most adaptive Gypsies and spread them as thinly as possible throughout the Republic, while the most intractable in the third group were to be left until later. As a Gypsy spokesman laconically commented a few years afterwards: "They plan how many there should be in each village : horses, cows and Gypsies". (quoted Húbschmannová).

A 1967 report emphasised that statistics based on such a categorisation of Gypsies were inherently unreliable.

Although...the differentiation process [among Gypsies] takes place objectively and...these groups really exist, it must be recognised that the assignment of specific Gypsy families into groups involves subjective judgement. For this reason it is necessary to take the statistical results only as a rough guide. (94).

Yet while readers of statistics were cautioned, no similar warning was given to the NC officials who were to make the assignment into categories. To the contrary the 'Main Directions' guide-lines urged NCs that,

...the division [of Gypsies into groups] and [the appropriate] manner of solution [e.g. transfer etc.] should be made binding for all bodies and institutions.

(85)

The classification, therefore, rested entirely on the arbitrary attempts of NC officials to match Gypsies against what were little more than crude stereotypes of life-styles. Against these decisions the Gypsies had no right of appeal; indeed they did not even have the right to be informed of their classification.

Only one group of Gypsies appeared to escape the restrictions; those regarded as 'fully assimilated' who did not count officially as Gypsies at all. But although this group existed in theory, any particular Gypsy - no matter how assimilated in life-style - could be prevented from moving since NCs were not required to keep records of the classification of individuals or families, only to provide statistics of group totals for occasional reports. Should they attempt to move, such Gypsies were liable to be returned home at their own expense, like any others, even if they had managed to buy or rent accommodation and find employment on their own initiative. They might even be prosecuted for nomadism under Law 74.

These sweeping measures to curtail Gypsies' freedom of movement had no legal basis as yet, although it was hoped that a revision of Law 74 would make good this deficiency in the near future. A number of possible modifications were considered at the Government Committee meeting of June 1966. A major problem was whether the amended law should refer to Gypsies by name like the 1965 measures, in this way risking the charge of discrimination, or whether it should be cast in a more general form like the original law, with the consequent danger of ambiguity, i.e. failing to indicate sufficiently clearly that the law concerned only Gypsies. There were also misgivings that any legal attempt to determine the place of residence and work of Gypsies would be in conflict with the Constitution and perhaps even with international law.

Eventually an 'ends justify the means' argument was put forward, reminiscent of the 1959 manual's position that the original 'measures do not have a discriminatory character, for their consequences lead



only to a speeding-up of re-education - and thereby benefit our gypsy fellow-citizens". (5:20).

The duty to work, perhaps in a specified place, under the new law would not be in conflict with the Constitution or international covenants because the aim of the measure would be to raise these people to a higher standard of living. (90)

In support of this view appeal was made to article five of International Covenant No.111/1958 on 'Discrimination (Employment and Occupation)' "which states essentially that such measures would not be regarded as discrimination where the aim was to meet the specific needs of people who must be afforded special help". (90). This justification was accepted by the chairman, who did not see "such a problem [with possible infringements of the Constitution and international covenants] if the law will be motivated by the special needs of gypsies" (90) and the Government Committee agreed that the amended Law 74 be placed before the National Assembly (Parliament) by the 15th of September.

However the Government Committee's belief that the modified law represented positive discrimination to help Gypsies was not shared by the National Assembly's Constitutional Law Committee nor by its Committee for Local Government.

[These] did not recommend amending [law 74] for the general opinion was that the proposed solution of limiting the movement of the gypsy population in practice limits their freedom of residence and therefore is not in harmony with article 31 of the Constitution. (90)

This was a severe setback with far-reaching implications. It not only prevented the amendment of law 74, leaving NCs with no strictly legal means of preventing Gypsy population movement, but suggested

that a major policy document - the 'Principles for Organising the Dispersal and Transfer of the Gypsy Population' (83) - was in conflict with the Constitution. In directing NCs to resist all unplanned Gypsy population movement, returning such migrants to their homes at their own expense, the Government Committee was probably instructing NCs to break the law.

Even worse, the National Assembly decision cast serious doubts on the legality of the Ministry of the Interior's 1959 directive for law 74 about the Register of Nomads, for this too restricted freedom of movement and residence. Indeed, inclusion on the register was the result of an administrative NC decision, not any judgement in a court of law based on evidence which the accused had the right to challenge. Similarly removal from the register was left entirely to the discretion of NCs and could not be achieved by legal appeal.

Stated bluntly, it appeared that the entire attempt from 1958 onwards to control Gypsy population movement was illegal yet, having been made aware of these disturbing anomalies, the Government Committee made no further attempt to investigate them or to rectify them. Government Decree 502/1965 and its associated directives remained technically in force until 1970 in the Czech lands and until 1972 in Slovakia, while Law 74 has still not been repealed.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE DISPERSAL AND TRANSFER PROGRAMME AND ITS CAUSES.

The Plan

Government Decree No. 159/15.5.67 approved a national timetable for a 'Dispersal and Transfer' programme until 1970 drawn up by the Government Committee. As well as specifying targets of families and persons to be rehoused, the plan also included targets for the elimination of 'undesirable concentrations' (including settlements), unhygienic flats and huts as well as for basic amenities to be constructed in those concentrations not to be eliminated before the end of 1970. Budgetary requirements were also given.

Plan for dispersal of Gypsy families within the region.

(1967 - 1970).      (97)

| Region               | Gypsy families to be dispersed |                |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
|                      | Czech regions                  | Slovak regions |
| Prague               | -                              |                |
| Central Bohemia      | 72                             |                |
| South Bohemia        | 49                             |                |
| West Bohemia         | 74                             |                |
| North Bohemia        | 120                            |                |
| East Bohemia         | 65                             |                |
| South Moravia        | -                              |                |
| North Moravia        | -                              |                |
| West Slovakia        |                                | 2,208          |
| Central Slovakia     |                                | 1,230          |
| East Slovakia        |                                | 2,510          |
| Total [ČSR/SSR]      | 380                            | 5,948          |
| Total Czechoslovakia | 6,328                          |                |



Plan for eliminating Gypsy concentrations and dwellings and rehousing Gypsy families and persons (1967-1970) (97)

|   | Slovakia             | Czech lands           |                        |            | Czechoslovakia |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------|----------------|
|   |                      | Inside concentrations | Outside concentrations | Total      |                |
| 'Undesirable gypsy concentrations'              | Total                | 86                    | -                      | 86         | 1,113          |
|   | Elim.to 1970         | 83                    | -                      | 83         | 694            |
|   | Rem.after 1970       | 3                     | -                      | 3          | 419            |
| Huts and unhygienic flats                       | Total                | 453                   | 1295                   | 1748       | 14248          |
|   | Elim.to 1970         | 428                   | 1067                   | 1495       | 8295           |
|   | Rem.after 1970       | 25                    | 228                    | 253        | 6003           |
| **Gypsy fams./ persons in unhygienic dwellings. | Total                | 529/3200              | 1590/9880              | 2119/13080 | 18619/118580   |
|   | Rehoused by 1970     | 499/3000              | 1293/8150              | 1792/11150 | 9992/63650     |
|   | Remaining after 1970 | 30/ 200               | 297/1730               | 327/1930   | 8627/54930     |

2235

Notes: \* Estimate

⊕ Although the sum of sub-totals do not equal total, these figures are from the original.

\*\* Gypsies in Slovakia were to be rehoused by transfer and dispersal; those in the Czech lands by dispersal alone.

Plans for transfer of Gypsy families from Slovakia to  
the Czech regions (1967 - 1970). (97)

| From : Slovak region             | To : Czech region      | Gypsy families |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| West Slovakia :                  | Central Bohemia        | 136            |
|                                  | South Bohemia          | 235            |
| W.Slovakia - total               | -                      | 371            |
| Central Slovakia :               | South Moravia          | 600            |
| East Slovakia :                  | West Bohemia           | 342            |
|                                  | North Moravia          | 834            |
|                                  | South Moravia (Vyškov) | 30             |
| E. Slovakia - total              | -                      | 1206           |
| Total families to be transferred |                        | 2177*          |

\* Comprising about 14,000 persons.

Plan for construction of basic amenities (1967-70). (97)

| Wells | WCs | Roads (km) | Electrid<br>connections | Public<br>lighting | Regulation<br>of streams | Others |
|-------|-----|------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------|
| 284   | 537 | 119.5      | 70                      | 43                 | 26                       | 55     |

To finance this massive and ambitious programme a budget of 571,661,000 crowns (about £30 million) was approved, of which the 1967 budget was 119,108,000 crowns (about £6½ million). (97).

Details of this budget are not given in this study, since little of the available funds were used.

Gypsy Population Movement - Planned and Unplanned

Although the completed national timetable for dispersal and transfer of Gypsies was finally approved only in May 1967, local authorities had already set to work as instructed early in 1966, preparing their own preliminary plans for the current and subsequent years. As well as passing these draft timetables to higher bodies for modification and eventual inclusion in the national plan, some local authorities took immediate action to begin the transfers. However resistance was reported on the part of some Czech NCs from the very start. As early as June 1966 a Slovak member of the Government Committee complained that:

Up till now the South Bohemia RNC has not answered the letter of the West Slovakia RNC chairman about transfers and the Central Bohemia RNC refused to carry out any transfers this year [1966] even though 60 gypsy families are prepared for transfer in the West Slovakia Region. (90)

The first task of NCs was to determine the size of their problem i.e. to reclassifiy systematically their Gypsies into three categories. The second category would then be the initial group for dispersal and transfer while the third would require firm educational and supervisory measures. There is no evidence that NCs were alarmed by the inadequacy of the criteria but the inevitably arbitrary nature of their decisions and consequent meaninglessness of the results is demonstrated by the erratically fluctuating totals by category each time a new assessment was made. Although no data is available for 1966, this is well illustrated by subsequent figures from the Spišská Nová Ves district.



Gypsy population of Spišská Nová Ves districtby category : (1967, 1968).

| Gypsies by Category |                        |                              |                   |                        |         |
|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|---------|
| (130)               | Date of classification | I<br>"outside concentration" | II<br>"adaptable" | III<br>"most backward" | TOTAL   |
| (128)               | 1.2.67                 | 1,655                        | 3,347             | 5,579                  | 10,200* |
| (130)               | 31.12.67               | 3,017                        | 4,839             | 2,393                  | 10,249  |
| (160)               | 31.12.68               | 1,663                        | 5,729             | 3,241                  | 10,633  |

\* The mistake in the totals for this year is probably for category III.

In Spišská Nová Ves, at least, the programme started in chaos as Gypsies - eager to move to the Czech lands - besieged the NC official in charge.

During the period January to March 1966 the situation was utterly confused. Whole crowds of gypsies (40 to 50 people daily) came to see the secretary of the committee [for gypsy affairs with the result that]...he did not fulfil the tasks allocated to him, pleading that he was fully occupied with the purchase of family houses and with arranging the necessary financial resources for the continued purchase of gypsy huts....

On 28.4.66 the documents for 58 hut purchases were presented [for authorisation]. (129)

Shortly afterwards, following a check by the control department, the "secretary of the committee [was found to have] committed a punishable offence of an extent as yet unknown" (124) and was later convicted of misappropriation of funds for hut purchases". \*\*

---

\*\* This appears a sudden lapse in an official who, from documents at least, was for several years a vigorous and often outspoken secretary.

In spite of such difficulties the DNC drew up a timetable for transferring 156 families, comprising 1,247 persons, in 1966-1970 and pressed on with the first transfers after agreements had been concluded with two districts in the North Moravia Region - Vsetín, "a mainly wooded and agricultural district" (106) and Přerov, a town with 35,000 inhabitants and engineering, textile and chemical industries.

In July 1966 for example, agreement was reached with Vsetín on the transfer of nine (named) Gypsy families from the village of Bystrany. This evidently aroused hopes of further imminent transfers from Bystrany for Spišská Nová Ves DNC had to write to the LNC asking them "to prevent any further visits of your gypsy citizens to Vsetín DNC or this DNC and not to give them any confirmations because this only complicates the work of state bodies unnecessarily". (120).

In a late 1967 report by the North Moravia RNC, Spišská Nová Ves and its partner DNCs are singled out for especial praise.

As for Vsetín DNC and its partner Spišská Nová Ves, no serious difficulties were encountered. The choice of families for transfer was made very responsibly and likewise houses....and employment were ensured with the maximum consideration paid to the wishes of the moving Gypsies. This responsible approach on both sides and the close co-operation no doubt helped in the successful completion of the whole task for the years 1966-1967. Here it was possible to discern a contrary trend to that in the majority of other districts - for during the implementation of the transfer, the mistrust and resistance of local officials lessened....and a similar tendency could be seen in the reactions of citizens. For objectivity we add that.....at the start of the transfer a relatively low number of gypsy families was involved. (106).

Spišská Nová Ves' other partner, Přerov (also a partner of Bardejov DNC in E. Slovakia), was also commended for its procedure. Apparently Přerov officials often visited Bardejov and chose families directly in gypsy settlements. They visited the gypsy families, photographed them, obtained all the necessary information and arranged the means and date of transfer....Gypsies who showed interest were enabled to acquaint themselves with their new residence in advance....Immediately after transfer they were provided with beds, mattresses, bedclothes and clothes and shoes for the children - also old furniture. Private citizens often contributed such materials. After resettlement Gypsy families were given 500 crowns for coal, wood and potatoes. (106).

This almost idyllic account of successful transfers between Spišská Nová Ves and its Czech partners was exceptional. At the same time it was highly unreliable for more detailed documents revealed urgent and recurring problems - often related to difficulties in obtaining and purchasing new accommodation. Probably this account represented an attempt by the North Moravia RNC to show progress to the Government Committee rather than a realistic assessment of the situation.

According to the plan Gypsies to be transferred were to sell their previous hut or house (for demolition or renovation) to their own DNC which could then augment the sale price by a discretionary grant. This sum, with the possible addition of personal savings or a state loan, was expected to cover the purchase price of a new home in the Czech lands.



Most transfers were planned to rural areas where state flats were in particularly short supply, but in any case older family houses were thought to be the most suitable for incoming Gypsies. However the generally higher house prices in the Czech lands meant that the total funds available to prospective Gypsy purchasers were insufficient to buy houses that were adequate for their large families and so, in practice, they were usually restricted to the bottom end of the housing market.

The North Moravia RNC reported that:

even in those cases where the sale price [of a house in Slovakia] (including the permitted grant) is sufficient to buy a house in our region, NCs are compelled to provide...a grant or a loan for the purchase of a stove, wiring, paint etc. In a few cases these Gypsies obtained part of the money by a loan from the State Savings Bank. (106)

There were also difficulties in the necessary purchase of old huts for sometimes:

before the move is completed sons or daughters move into the huts [to be vacated] and thereafter the sale price, which could have been used in purchasing alternative accommodation in the Czech lands, cannot be paid. We have seven such cases. (129).

These were difficulties with optimum cases where both source and destination NCs followed the guidelines laid down in the 'Principles... for Dispersal and Transfer' document. Other documents indicated that adequate NC co-ordination was often lacking and in particular transferred Gypsies sometimes had to find their own new accommodation.

From transfers to Czech districts we [Spišská Nová Ves DNC] also have experience of gypsy citizens choosing accommodation planned for demolition.... but because of the low sale prices of their huts they cannot find [other] accommodation for a price they can afford, so we must often change the choice of families. (129).

This has the implication that sales of previous dwellings were sometimes completed before new accommodation had been found and without any guarantee that suitable accommodation was even available. The DNC reported three Gypsy families returning to Bystrany from the Czech lands to live with relatives "having spent the proceeds from the sale of their huts". (129).

To avoid such occurrences the previous practice of paying the sale price directly to the Gypsy owners was changed on 14th July 1966 to a system where the sale price could be used solely for the purchase of a new house.

Sometimes lack of NC co-ordination resulted in Gypsies being left homeless. In a letter to an Ostrava SNC, Spišská Nová Ves DNC explained that they had received official NC agreement to the proposed sale of a family house in Ostrava by a pensioner to two Gypsy families for 72,000 crowns. "On the basis of documents about the sale, the [old] houses of the two Gypsy families were purchased and permission was given to demolish them. The families were paid for their houses and allowed a grant of up to 24,000 crowns each for the purchase of an alternative family house". The DNC urged that the Ostrava SNC settle the matter as soon as possible "because these families now have nowhere to live". (122).

In other cases Gypsies, whose old homes had already been bought by the DNC, were refused the discretionary grant, even when, on their own initiative, they had found alternative accommodation where the NC was willing to agree to the sale and to their registration as permanent residents.

An Ostrava house-owner wrote to the Spišská Nová Ves DNC requesting "a confirmation that M.Ž. received 4,800 crowns in cash for the sale of her house and in addition has 40,000 crowns set aside in the bank which she can use for the purchase of alternative accommodation....The LNC here has no objections to the sale of this house". She received in reply the following:

For the purchase of a family house we require a document containing...an official valuation of the house...and in addition a confirmation that the LNC has no objection to the sale and will register the purchaser as a resident ..... In the case in question M.Ž. was paid 4,800 crowns by the DNC for her property and indeed in addition the DNC could make an exception of up to 40,000 crowns for the purchase of a house.

[However] we do not agree with the sale to the person named and the above-mentioned sum will not be paid. Under no circumstances do we recommend this sale. But wait a little and we will recommend to you a citizen of gypsy origin from our district to whom we would allow the financial means to buy a family house....As far as you are able, let the above-named person know you have decided not to sell the house. (118)

The practice of some Slovak DNCs who purchased huts before alternative accommodation had been ensured, leaving this task to the Gypsies themselves, made life very difficult for Czech NCs in industrial areas since such official breaches of the principles for dispersal and transfer greatly obscured the difference between planned and unplanned movement. More importantly it threatened previously agreed plans and also left the migrant Gypsies without protection. All this was well illustrated in a letter from Karvina (an industrial town near Ostrava) DNC to Vsetín and Přerov DNCs nearly.

The agreement [to transfer gypsies to Karvina from Košice, E.Slovakia (its partner)] is gravely jeopardised by the fact that gypsy families arrive



in our district from other Slovak districts, mainly from the Spišská Nová Ves district, where their houses were allegedly demolished, in order to buy family houses.

This creates considerable problems for us, not to mention the fact that this unorganised emigration is made use of speculatively by some of our citizens who offer for sale family houses standing on ground which is subsiding due to mine workings. In many cases these are not even proper family houses. This occurred in Orlová where two gypsy couples from the Spišská Nová Ves district...paid 83,016 crowns. In the interests of society the registration of this sale will not be permitted and the contract will have no validity.

In view of the fact that transfers of gypsy families from [Spišská Nová Ves] are to be made to the Vsetín and Prerov districts, we ask you... if you are willing to accept these two gypsy families and possibly enable them to buy a suitable family house. If not we will be forced to return these families to the Spišská Nová Ves district.  
(126).

Eventually Czech NCs decided to treat such semi-planned movement as if it were unplanned, since it did not have their prior approval, and migrant Gypsies were often returned on arrival.

There have been cases, although fewer, where gypsies from Slovakia try individually to buy a house or otherwise obtain a flat in our [North Moravia] region on their own initiative, although sometimes with the support of Slovak LNCs, which is evident from various confirmations and recommendations with which they are provided.  
(106).

The practice of actively encouraging Gypsies to migrate to the Czech lands without any guarantee of accommodation on arrival appears to have been widespread among Slovakian NCs. A 1967 Government Committee report argued that the resistance and mistrust of Czech NCs was:

strengthened by frequent cases where...the free movement of a considerable part of the gypsy population is sometimes...supported by some NCs, mainly in Slovakia, who...encourage gypsies to seek a place by their own efforts anywhere in the Czech lands. Usually this occurs with gypsies where there is not the slightest guarantee that they take their moving seriously. (94).

However, in a confused situation with no adequate mechanism of control, it was difficult to establish to what extent NCs were implicated in failures. The accusation was made that "Slovak NCs give [gypsies] a confirmation that their houses are to be demolished in order that they can find new accommodation themselves - which in practice encourages nomadism around the country" (90), but Slovak NCs in their defence explained that "gypsies who found out about the transfer principle, demolished their own huts by themselves, presenting DNCs with the fact that they had nowhere to live". (90).

During the period 1966-1968 unplanned migration to the North Moravia Region gradually diminished, but by no means to the extent claimed by the RNC in a decidedly over-optimistic report to the Government Committee where the decrease was attributed to the deterrent effect of the RNC's policy of returning such migrants.

It can generally be said that recently there has been a marked drop in the rate of natural migration ....In 1967 there were about four to six cases in each district. In most cases these migrating families (the majority of which moved into derelict houses) were sent back to their former residence but in a few cases they were allowed to stay and given the possibility of buying a house. Most cases were of migration from Slovakia but some were of migration within the North Moravia Region....

It is very likely that a definite contribution to the lessening in migration has been made by the general knowledge among gypsies that the reaction of the majority of DNCs, MNCs, and LNCs to these attempts is to resist them firmly. (106).

In fact, later and more complete statistics for 1967 show a figure of 113 unplanned arrivals of Gypsy families in the region (i.e. about 11 per district). Of these only 25 families (or 22 per cent) were returned to their former residence. (See below).

On the whole, however, the statistics that are available tend to bear out most of the evaluations of the preceding pages. The figures for the Spišská Nová Ves district are incomplete but are complemented by the fuller survey of the North Moravia Region.

Planned transfers from Spišská Nová Ves. Plan and Reality.  
(1966 - 1970).

| (123) | Transferred persons | 1966 | 1967 | 1968 | 1969 | 1970 |
|-------|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
|       | Plan (1.9.66)       | 440  | 271  | 200  | 112  | 224  |
|       | Reality             | 83   | ?    | 61   | 20   | -    |

(124)

(147)I-IX  
only(165)I-VIII  
only

The discrepancy between plan and reality is plain, as is the drop in actual numbers transferred.

Comparison of organised transfers and natural migration from  
Spišská Nová Ves (1966).

|                 |          | Organised transfers | Natural migration |                  |       |
|-----------------|----------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------|
|                 |          |                     | To Czech lands    | From Czech lands | Total |
| No. of migrants | Families | 12                  | 45                | 3                | 48    |
|                 | Persons  | 83                  | 113               | 20               | 133   |
|                 |          | (124)               | (124)             | (129)            | (124) |



In 1966 Gypsies migrating by organised transfers (all to Vsetín) were greatly outnumbered by those migrating on their own initiative, although it is impossible to determine what proportion of natural migration was 'semi-planned' in the sense discussed above. The much smaller average family size for natural migrants can be simply explained by the fact that many of these migrants were probably younger people without families or married men, who left their families in Spišská Nová Ves while seeking work in the Czech lands.

Gypsy Outmigration and Immigration\* - Spišská Nová Ves (1966-68).

(units are Gypsy persons).

| Year       | OUTMIGRATION   |             |       | INMIGRATION      |               |       | MIGRATION BALANCE |          |       |
|------------|----------------|-------------|-------|------------------|---------------|-------|-------------------|----------|-------|
|            | To Czech lands | To Slovakia | Total | From Czech lands | From Slovakia | Total | Czech lands       | Slovakia | Total |
| (124)1966  | -              | -           | 196   | 20               | Ø             | 20    | -                 | -        | -176  |
| (130)1967  | 117            | 3           | 120   | 21               | 10            | 31    | -96               | + 7      | - 89  |
| (160)1968  | 87             | 22          | 109   | 100              | 54            | 154   | +13               | +32      | + 45  |
| Tot. 66-68 | -              | -           | 425** | 141              | 64            | 205   | -                 | -        | -220  |

\* Outmigration includes both planned and unplanned migration.

Inmigration is 'a priori' unplanned, even though some cases are the result of Czech NC expulsions.

---

\*\* As a footnote it is perhaps worth noting that the total out-migration of Gypsies in the three years 1966-68 (both planned and unplanned, both to the Czech lands and Slovakia) was still less than the target for planned transfers to the Czech lands in 1966 alone (i.e. 440. See table on previous page).

The general pattern revealed by these figures is that of a gradual reversal of the migratory flow. During the period 1966-1968 total outmigration dropped by almost a half while there was an accompanying increase in immigration, which in 1968 was roughly 50 per cent more than outmigration.\*

Whereas outmigration to the Czech lands fell and immigration rose, both outmigration to and immigration from other districts in Slovakia increased. Yet movement within Slovakia remained relatively less important and in 1968 the rates of outmigration to and immigration from the Czech lands were respectively four times and twice their counterparts to and from other districts in Slovakia.

Statistics on transfers compiled by the North Moravia Region are more comprehensive, although marred by the regrettable omission of any details from Ostrava - by far the largest district, which either could not or would not supply the required information to the RNC. The original RNC tables gave figures for each district in the region except Ostrava. Those tables given below are simplified by including only three districts - Bruntal, Karvina and Vsetín. The first is included as a district criticised by the RNC as the worst DNC in this matter (106), while Karvina DNC was the most conscientious practitioner and enthusiastic supporter of the 1965 measures, almost alone in still advocating their retention in 1970. Apart from being praised by the RNC, Vsetín was of course a partner of Spišská Nová Ves DNC.

---

\* The causes of this reversal are discussed later but at this point it should be mentioned that the sudden 1968 jump in immigration from the Czech lands was at least partly a reflection of the flight of frightened Gypsies from the Czech lands to their home settlements in Slovakia after the invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies in August 1968.

Transfers from Slovakia to the North Moravia Region\* (1966-68).  
(152)

(units are Gypsy families)

| District        | Transfers (Gypsy families) |         |      |         |      |         | Of which transferred |         |                      |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
|                 | 1966                       |         | 1967 |         | 1968 |         | 1966 - 1968          |         |                      |                      |
|                 | Plan                       | Reality | Plan | Reality | Plan | Reality | Plan                 | Reality | Remained in district | Returned to Slovakia |
| Bruntal         | 5                          | 6       | 10   | 4       | 5    | Ø       | 20                   | 10      | 10                   | Ø                    |
| Karvina         | 20                         | 20      | 25   | 22      | 25   | 12      | 70                   | 54      | 48                   | 5                    |
| Vsetín          | 11                         | 15      | 15   | 5       | 15   | Ø       | 41                   | 20      | 18                   | 2                    |
| N.Mor.Reg.TOTAL | 132                        | 108     | 176  | 95      | 177  | 29      | 485                  | 232     | 197                  | 15                   |
|                 |                            |         |      |         |      |         |                      |         |                      | 5                    |

\* Not including Ostrava.



A growing discrepancy between plan and reality is clearly seen, especially in the regional totals. By 1968 the transfer system had more or less collapsed in most districts with persistent Karvina alone accounting for 40% of the region's transfers. Figures given are for families but assuming seven per family, then roughly 1600 persons were transferred from 1966 to 1968. The relatively low number of families moving away after transfer would seem to indicate at least a fair degree of satisfaction with the new conditions on the part of the Gypsy migrants, although it must be remembered that many of their previous homes would have been demolished.

Parallel to the decrease in transfers is a corresponding overall decrease in natural unplanned migration to the North Moravia Region. The 1968 total of immigrating families was only half that of 1966. Karvina was an exception where immigration actually slightly increased until in 1968 half of the migrants chose this district as their destination.

It is remarkable, however, bearing in mind the strict principles for dispersal and transfer, that overall only 20% and in any year of the period less than a quarter of natural migrants failed to find accommodation. As the number of migrants dropped the chances of those who did migrate improved, although they found accommodation more often without NC help than with it. Bruntál is perhaps unique for not a single immigrating family failed to find accommodation and without any help from the DNC. Many districts, including Vsetín, reported no natural immigration but this is dubious. No proportions are given for migrants from Slovakia and from the Czech lands but the majority can be assumed to come from Slovakia (106).



If these figures are accurate however, they do not substantiate the RNC claim, quoted above, that failure to find accommodation due to NC firmness was a principal factor in the decreases of natural immigration.

Unfortunately no figures were given for outmigration, apart from those unfortunate immigrants who had to leave at once, but the 1968 'Census of the Gypsy Population' (151) for Ostrava showed a complementary trend to that in Spišská Nová Ves. In 1968 the migratory tide had changed and for the first time the number of Gypsies migrating home to Slovakia from the Czech lands exceeded those going the other way. (See following table for comparison).

In reports to the North Moravia RNC in 1969, individual DNCs often attributed the breakdown of the transfer system to the Gypsies themselves. Vsetín claimed that after federalisation in late 1968 "gypsies themselves refused to be transferred and....Spišská Nová Ves and Vsetín DNCs agreed that the transfers would be discontinued". (152). Equally strange was the account of Frýdek-Místek DNC which reported the return of Gypsies to Slovakia after federalisation which "cannot be prevented for they are generally born in Slovakia and have therefore become citizens of the SSR [Slovak Socialist Republic] from 1st January 1969"\* (152).

Predictably a more subtle and honest analysis came from Karvina, where the root of the problem was seen in unrealistic transfer quotas

---

\* Around this time several Gypsies in the Czech lands expressed fears to me that their new SSR citizenship could become an administrative weapon for expelling them to Slovakia.



Comparison of outmigration and immigration for Spisská Nová Ves and Ostrava in 1968. (Units are Gypsy persons).

| District (country*)            | OUTMIGRATION     |                 |       | IMMIGRATION        |                   |       | MIGRATORY BALANCE |              |       |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------|--------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|--------------|-------|
|                                | To other country | To same country | Total | From other country | From same country | Total | Other country     | Same country | Total |
| (160) Spisská N.Ves (Slovakia) | 87               | 22              | 109   | 100                | 54                | 154   | +13               | +32          | +45   |
| (151) Ostrava (Cz.lands)       | 56               | 45              | 101   | 39                 | 35                | 74    | -17               | -10          | -27   |

\* The two countries, the Czech lands and Slovakia, cover all possibilities in these cases and are mutually exclusive.

with no regard for accommodation available but equally in inconsistencies within the system. In contrast to the problem of Vsetín, where potential migrants refused the warm offer of transfers, and of Frýdek, which found itself sadly powerless to prevent the exodus of its Gypsy population, Karvina reported in mid-1969 that "unplanned migration is the absolute problem number one in our district. The cause of this we see in the contradictions between individual regulations or in the irrelevance of a whole group of laws and regulations". (152). Nevertheless Karvina soldiered on in the face of increasing difficulties. "However we do not refuse organised transfers and in 1969 we have transferred five families and have houses prepared for a further two more....We will continue as circumstances allow. It is the only way". (152). But Karvina's stand was an isolated one and by this time the majority of other DNCs had followed Vsetín in discontinuing their planned transfers.

Local statistics from Spišská Nová Ves on the dispersal of Gypsy population concentrations are much sparser but show a corresponding lack of progress. A 1971 report by the district medical authority gave a depressing summary of developments since the start of the assimilation campaign over a decade earlier.

The plan to eliminate Gypsy settlements gradually, which was agreed over ten years ago, has still not been realised....There was little progress in the construction of public wells and hygienically adequate toilets in the settlements...and those which were built either do not serve their purpose nowadays or else have been destroyed in the meantime. (174)

Although the only figures available are too fragmentary to give in tabular form, they confirmed this assessment. After a promising start in 1966 when 5 smaller settlements and a total of 93 huts were demolished,

Comparison of Gypsy housing density - (1964 and 1968).

| Date      | Area        | Total Gypsy population | No. of households | No. of dwellings | Households per house | Persons per house | Average area per person (m <sup>2</sup> ) |
|-----------|-------------|------------------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---|
| late 1964 | E.Slov.Reg. | 55,656                 |                   | 8,094            |                      | 6.9               | 4.2 (21)                                  |
| 31.12.68  | Sp.N.Ves.   | 10,633                 | 1,807             | 1,357            | 1.33                 | 7.1               | 3.4* (160)                                |

\* (174) - 1971.

Comparison of basic amenities - Spišská Nová Ves (1962 and 1971)

| Date | No. of rural districts with Gypsy inhabs. | No. of rural districts where Gypsies have:- |                         |                    |                  |                    |       |
|------|---|---|-------------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------|
|      |   | adequate water supply                       | inadequate water supply | only surface water | adequate toilets | inadequate toilets |       |
| 1962 | 67  | Ø   | 54                      | 13                 | Ø                | 67                 | (37)  |
| 1971 | 60  | 12  | 41                      | 7                  | 8                | 52                 | (160) |



by the end of 1970 only 154 huts in all had been eliminated during the five-year period - an average of 30 a year. (124,130,160,164,148). Likewise toilet, well and road construction and electrification proceeded extremely slowly. (116,124,148).

Meanwhile the rate of rehousing Gypsies outside their settlements showed a corresponding decline. In 1966 a total of 83 dwellings were allocated to Gypsies (of which 76 were of the limited stock of older houses) but in the first eight months of 1969 this figure had fallen to 5. (124,130,164). Even private house-building by Gypsies themselves was disappointing. In 1966 18 new houses were built by Gypsies (124) - the majority in settlements no doubt - whilst in 1967 the Gypsies' share of new building plots was only 13 of the total of 482 (164) (i.e. 2.7 per cent although they formed 8.3 per cent of the district's population).

In view of the lack of detailed statistics from Spišská Nová Ves a more reliable idea of the stagnation is given by a rough comparison of living conditions in the settlements at the end of the 1960s with those before the 1965 measures. This shows that although there was some improvement in basic amenities the dispersal and transfer programme had failed to keep pace with the birth rate and consequently overcrowding in Gypsy settlements had actually increased during the period.

Figures for dispersals within the North Moravia Region are somewhat fuller, although Ostrava again declined to supply information to the RNC. The importance of the contribution of the untypically zealous Karvina DNC is evident from the table below and if this district's figures are subtracted from the regional totals, the number of families

Planned dispersal within the North Moravia Region\* (1966-1968)      (Units are Gypsy families).  
 (152)

| District        | 1966 |         | 1967 |         | 1968 |         | 1966-68 |         | of which moved |                 |                 |
|-----------------|------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|---------|---------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                 | Plan | Reality | Plan | Reality | Plan | Reality | Plan    | Reality | Remained       | Within district | Out of district |
|                 |      |         |      |         |      |         |         |         |                |                 |                 |
| Karvina         | -    | 3       | 5    | 6       | 15   | 29      | 20      | 38      | 36             | Ø               | 2               |
| N.Mor.Reg.TOTAL | 14   | 13      | 9    | 10      | 15   | 29      | 38      | 52      | 49             | 1               | 2               |

\* Not including Ostrava.

Many districts, including Bruntal and Vsetín, did not report dispersal, however, no planned dispersal was shown for N. Moravia Region on the 1967 nation plan. (97).

dispersed each year shows the same declining trend as for planned transfers - ten in 1966, four in 1967 and finally zero in 1968. Whereas the figures for transfers to the North Moravia Region are probably fairly accurate, those for dispersals are strangely low and it is likely that most DNCs simply did not bother to keep a special record of Gypsy families rehoused by them. Nevertheless on the whole country districts had few Gypsies to disperse while urban districts made little effort to carry out a thorough dispersal.

#### The Housing Shortage and its Effects.

This account of the collapse of the transfer and dispersal programme in the Spišská Nová Ves district and North Moravia region suggests that all the factors which had previously hindered the implementation of the 1958 measures were still in operation and that against them the re-organised administrative structure could make little headway. While this was true the old problems of housing shortages, employment imbalances, uncontrolled natural migration and local authority apathy and outright resistance did not remain entirely as before; they were all modified by the movement of the economy and Czechoslovakian society in general in the direction of 'market socialism' following the traumatic economic crisis of the early 1960s.

The 'New Economic Policy' (usually associated with the name of economist Ota Šik) proposed a drastic reduction of central planning and control functions and a consequent increase of local works autonomy. Productivity and efficiency were to be increased by cutting subsidies



to inefficient firms, by reducing over-staffing in works and by generally increasing the element of competition. This gradual replacement of bureaucratic dirigisme by more decentralised forms - was widely hailed, both within and outside Czechoslovakia, as a significant democratic reform of what remained the most rigid Stalinist regime in the socialist bloc. As regards the planned solution of the 'gypsy question' however, this development only intensified the difficulties since it undermined the whole basis of the 1965 measures : increased central control of the assimilation policy to enforce what were recognised as unpopular measures.

It is difficult to measure the extent of the continuing national housing shortage that had resulted from the diversion of construction resources into heavy industry in the 1950s but waiting lists were long and it was common for young married couples to share with their parents.

The housing situation among newlyweds was reported in 1966 to be as follows : 59.1 per cent lived with parents, 20.5 per cent had separate living quarters, and 4.1 per cent lived with other families.

(quoted Ulč<sup>v</sup> (2):50)

While the total of completed new houses increased steadily in an attempt to meet demand, the general movement towards an economy in which market forces played some role led to important changes in emphasis in new housing construction, favouring those better able to pay. The same development occurred a little later in Hungary.

The accent is to be shifted from new State housing towards co-operative building for which people save for a deposit, then borrow the rest and pay off the loan by instalments.

The ideal is not exactly a property-owning democracy. But the trend in Hungary is now more and more towards

a consumer society in which responsible citizens are those who have savings accounts.

('Guardian' 14.6.72).

Czechoslovakian house construction statistics clearly show this dramatic switch from state to co-operative housing. In 1955 the proportion of all new housing constituted by state flats had been 69 per cent but ten years later in 1965 it was only 21 per cent as compared with a 53 per cent share of co-operative housing. In 1965 the proportion for state flats was even lower than that for houses which citizens had built with their own resources and by their own labour (26 per cent).

Housing Construction by Type (1955-65) (Czechoslovakia).

| Dwellings constructed | 1955   | 1960   | 1965   |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| total                 | 48,800 | 73,800 | 75,000 |
| by public authorities | 33,800 | 42,100 | 15,800 |
| by co-operatives      | -      | 8,800  | 39,800 |
| privately             | 15,000 | 18,000 | 19,400 |

(Facts : 113)

This objective trend had ominous implications for co-operative housing was not generally considered in rehousing Gypsies. Grave doubts about the continuing supply of suitable accommodation were expressed in a long debate recorded in the minutes of a Government Committee meeting only eight months after Government Decree 502.

In response to the information that new houses for Gypsies could not be a supplement to existing plans but must form part of the

national planned target of 460,000 houses for the period 1966-1970, one critical committee member:

recommended that the CP Central Committee and government should be informed that the possibilities at present do not allow the gypsy problem to be solved and that measures should be adopted to enable RNCs...to work out their own proposals... from which a more realistic solution could be prepared. (90).

As previously the ideal was to rehouse Gypsies in older houses and flats but "houses which can be adapted are already scarce...and these reserve possibilities will not be sufficient for dispersal requirements". (90). Although the supply of such accommodation was dwindling it was stated that it would be enough for 1966 and 1967 needs but would then be virtually exhausted.

Accepting that new housing for Gypsies had to be included in the state plan, the same critic suggested that within the overall total of 460,000 housing units at least it would be possible to change the proportions of state flats and co-op flats in favour of the former, pointing out that since Gypsies to be dispersed would be taken from the second group, they would be unlikely to be able to raise the necessary deposit for a co-op flat.

Another solution discussed was to develop a simpler and cheaper housing unit for Gypsies costing 45,000 crowns per unit instead of the normal 60,000 crowns.

The chairman of the Committee put members' minds at rest by pointing out that they "must expect to encounter problems but this must not lead to pessimism and reminded them that the intention of the government in setting up the Government Committee was to obtain help in solving the gypsy question". (90).



The pessimism was justified, however, and in April 1967 in its important 'Report on fulfilling government directive 502' (94) the Government Committee warned that the whole dispersal and transfer programme was jeopardised by the housing shortage.

Accommodation in new places has been solved up till now mainly by adapting and repairing empty older family houses or flats with the aim of combining the financial resources of individual gypsies, NCs and firms. It is evident, however, that these possibilities will be gradually exhausted and with regard to the limited means of individual gypsies [it will be possible to rehouse them]...only by placing them in state flats, vacated on the departure of citizens to new flats and in individual cases placing them in new flats. The extent of the dispersal and transfer will be determined by these possibilities. (94).

The same report saw little prospect of easing the situation by means of works flats.

Many firms, although employing gypsies for some time and satisfied with their work, do not try to help them to improve their accommodation conditions ....There are frequent cases where a firm has employed a gypsy for many years and he still lives in some temporary accommodation (bachelor flat, caravan or works flat in a poor state of repair etc.). These problems are most marked with seasonally employed gypsies. (94).

A little later, in mid-1967, the North Moravia RNC predicted that they would be unable to rehouse 80 of the families planned for transfer from Slovakia that year - almost half the planned total - because of accommodation problems.

The outlook for succeeding years is similarly pessimistic....Apart from the lack of suitable buildings there are difficulties with building capacity and [in obtaining sufficient] building materials for the adaptation of older flats.

While there was an undoubtedly serious housing shortage throughout the 1960s it is necessary to put the potential impact of the 1965 measures in perspective for even had the 1967-1970 plan to rehouse 10,000 Gypsy families been completely fulfilled - using nothing but new housing - this still would have represented only 2.7 per cent of all new housing for the period. This share for the most deprived section of society appears modest (in 1967 Gypsies formed 1.6 per cent of the Republic's population), but in a time of severe shortage perhaps any rehousing plan would have been opposed. Such popular resistance was noted in an important 1969 report by the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (which by then had assumed overall responsibility for the 'gypsy question' in the Czech lands from the defunct Government Committee).

With reference to the general housing crisis, comments are made...about the preferential eligibility of Gypsies. (140)

In a 1969 report to the same ministry, the North Moravia RNC gave a similar explanation for its poor progress over the years 1966 to 1968 stating that transfers from Slovakia "were often opposed by NCs, the general public and by Gypsies already settled in the region". (152). This opposition was mainly attributed to the lack of accommodation but also to "bad experience with Gypsies as well as to groundless prejudice against settling Gypsies in town or village". (152). Federalisation and "exceptional [political] circumstances" were also listed as negative factors. In the same report the RNC confessed that dispersal had been attempted in only two of its ten districts.

In this hostile climate it is surprising that so many unplanned migrants to the Czech lands managed to remain there but Czech NCs had no effective means of preventing the influx; technically at least the failure to amend Law 74 on nomadism meant that they could only "note and record this movement because there are no legal means by which this can be restricted". (94). In practice, however, Czech NCs tried to discourage the newcomers by refusing to register them as permanent residents.

In places where they are temporarily employed and [temporarily registered as] residents, gypsies occupy flats which are in a state of disrepair or intended for demolition and their numbers are often increased by relatives and friends who move in with them. In this they cannot be prevented even by the housing regulations....In these cases NCs defend themselves by refusing to register these citizens as permanent residents. (94)

By this means NCs hoped to avoid responsibility for rehousing the migrants for although

registration as a permanent resident is not a claim for the immediate allocation of a flat,...it does mean that the NC in question has a responsibility to solve the situation that has arisen....As a rule this occurs in places of greater industrial and population concentration where the housing problem is difficult to solve and in addition where there are greater concentrations of gypsies. (94)

The Government Committee criticised this practice as illegal, pointing out that:

the Ministry of the Interior directive on law 52/1949 Sb. about population registration specifically states that registration as a permanent resident may not be made dependent on any other conditions, especially accommodation, economic, financial, etc. (94)



Yet these Czech local authorities were only following Government Committee instructions in refusing unplanned migrants; the Committee seemed unaware that it was its own. 'Principles for Organising Dispersal and Transfer' which were in conflict with the directive of the Ministry of the Interior! The Government Committee's successor in the Czech lands, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, had no such scruples and in its survey at the end of 1969, gave its approval to NC refusal to register unplanned Gypsy migrants as residents - either permanent or temporary.

NCs justifiably resist the influx of Gypsy families who have no possibility of suitable accommodation and employment in the district. They do not register the majority as residents and send them back from where they came, paying the fares (from funds intended for solving the Gypsy question).

(140)

As a result of Czech NC refusal to register them as resident, migrant Gypsies often found themselves in the anomalous position of not being registered anywhere, for in many cases they had already been de-registered by Slovak NCs. Their position was very similar to that of registered nomads who, if they moved without NC agreement, found themselves to be unregistered residents, technically unable to be employed or even rent or buy accommodation. As previously, however, employers frequently ignored the regulations and the Gypsies remained, often as squatters. A 1967 estimate put the number of such non-registered Gypsy residents in Karvina (North Moravia Region) as high as 17% of the district's Gypsy population. (105).

As part of its 1969 report to the Ministry, the North Moravia RNC attacked the progress reports of individual DNCs, including their recommendations for future administrative measures. These reports make

dismal reading, being full of accounts of NC attempts to turn away 'undesired migrants' and consequently the commonest suggestion was that residence registration regulations should be made more strict.

Although they did not state this openly, almost all DNCs in the region were evidently opposed to continuing the transfers from Slovakia, the sole exception being Karvina which saw "no other way".

Karvina's proposal was to make law the principles for dispersal and transfer and:

to fix [density] limits of permitted dispersal for individual districts (in the interest of gypsy citizens themselves), which should be made binding for all districts. We recommend 1% of the total population.\*

...We are aware that at first sight this proposal appears 'to limit personal freedom' but is it more humane to allow people to live in conditions unworthy of human beings? Keeping silent in this matter of hiding the truth is definitely unsocial.

(152).

As usual Karvina's contribution is important for this DNC came closest to the 'ideal type', envisaged in the 1965 and indeed 1958 measures. Had they come from any other NC, such suggestions could be justifiably suspected of aiming to strengthen the hand of DNCs in resisting natural migration, whilst at the same time leaving them free to continue their resistance to planned transfers. But Karvina's past record guaranteed that this was a genuine proposal to achieve the

---

\* In Hübšchmannová (op.cit.) DNCs are reported as operating a 5% maximum permitted density of Gypsies. While DNC officials may well have used this explanation verbally in attempting to turn away migrants, I have seen no documentary evidence for such a limit and certainly no national level document mentioned it.

overall policy goal of complete and harmonious assimilation of Gypsies throughout Czechoslovakia.

The moral and political dilemma posed was a major and recurring one. If it was accepted that assimilation was the inevitable but also beneficial fate of the Gypsy minority, to what extent was it permissible to assist the painful assimilation process by coercive administrative and legal measures which, if they were to be effective, would almost certainly contravene the laws and indeed the constitution? From the 1969 handbook onwards the general answer had been that in this particular case the desirable ends justified unpleasant short-term means. In an important sense, therefore, the proposal of Karvina to impose a rigid 1% maximum density of Gypsies per district was taking the 1958 policy to its logical administrative conclusions.



In Slovakia the housing shortage was less critical on the whole but there popular resistance was probably more important a factor in delaying Gypsy dispersal than in the Czech lands. A late 1968 report attributed slow progress in Slovakia not entirely

to the absolute drop in reserves of houses [but also]....to the increasing unwillingness of local people to accept gypsy families among themselves - not only in the case of gypsies from other villages but even from their own gypsy settlement. (146)

House-owners preferred to sell privately to other non-Gypsies rather than to NCs for rehousing Gypsies. (140).

Gypsies wishing to build their own houses during this period were hampered by familiar difficulties - lack of financial and material resources. "It is difficult to persuade individual State Savings Banks to make loans to gypsies", the Government Committee complained. (90). More serious was the general shortage of building materials which was blamed for "the relatively large number of unfinished family houses of gypsies [and also for deterring] other gypsy families from the intention of starting to build even a simple one-or two-room family house".

Yet even if they had acquired sufficient money and materials to build a family house, some Gypsies were frustrated by NCs who were unwilling to issue them with plots and permits to build either in a Slovakian village or in a Gypsy settlement. The former needs no explanation but in the case of the latter these NCs feared that to allow new building in settlements would contravene the principle of dispersal. After all the settlements were to vanish in a few years time.

Changing Employment Patterns and Migration

That decentralisation of ministerial authority to individual enterprises should have adversely affected the transfer programme seems paradoxical. Indeed, the continuing high demand for unskilled workers in the Czech lands during the late 1950s and early 1960s had been a major factor in frustrating control of Gypsy migration from Slovakia during the earlier phase of the assimilation policy and the 1965 plan to transfer Gypsies 'en masse' to the Czech lands might be regarded as a rationalisation of the already existing rural-to-urban migration of under-employed settlement Gypsies.

This was not really the case however, for in addition to the principle that Gypsies should be transferred to places where there was work for them - which by itself might have resulted in their transfer to industrial centres - there were also the requirements that there should be adequate accommodation available and that they should be dispersed as much as possible. Application of these two last principles meant a rural rather than an industrial destination for not only was the housing shortage more critical in the Czech towns and cities but these urban areas had been the destination of the overwhelming majority of previous Gypsy migrants. A rural destination was ideal for there was farm work in abundance.

Agriculture had been suffering for some time from an increasing manpower shortage and in 1966 "the average age [of the workforce was] ...roughly 10 years higher than in industry or the building industry". (Yearbook : 87). This situation had arisen because of the continuing priority given to heavy industry and official reports conceded that in agriculture the "working environment still leaves much to be

desired from the cultural point of view". (Facts : 78) and wages were significantly lower.\*

Gypsies, therefore, were expected to take up the jobs and houses of Czechs who had left the farms for the factories but understandably the Gypsies, too, preferred the better pay of urban areas - a fact which central government and local authorities alike appeared unable to appreciate. The Ministry of Labour complained:

There are numerous cases where Gypsy families have refused the chance of living in a family house in the country even though they live in thoroughly unsuitable and inadequate flats in town. (140).

In similar vein Vsetín - the partner of Spišská Nová Ves - accused transferred Gypsies of ingratitude. (This rural district, which lay near Ostrava yet beyond convenient commuting distance, had suffered population loss of its own inhabitants to the city).

Despite the fact that gypsies lived in Slovakia in very poor conditions with low wages...after reaching a certain level they suddenly become more demanding and dissatisfied. Some of them change their jobs in an attempt to earn more money....Many request accommodation in the town despite the fact that in Slovakia they lived in a village and often far from the village - without light and sometimes without water. (106).

Although employment was probably the most important factor determining their choice, Gypsies often preferred towns because they had relatives there and resisted transfer or dispersal to remote

---

\* In 1955 the national average wage in agriculture (excluding co-op farmers) was 70 per cent of that in industry, although this proportion rose to 84 per cent by 1965. However, in comparison with the most popular employment sector for Gypsies - construction - the corresponding proportions were 66 and 76 per cent. (Statistical Abstract : 35).



rural districts for this reason. An urban authority in North Bohemia gave a graphic illustration of the waste of resources and personal grief involved in trying to disperse Gypsies to country districts against their will.\*

It must be reported that five gypsy families who were moved [from our North Bohemia industrial area] to a country district do all they can to gain registration again as permanent residents in our town and at the same time try to find work here. There was a meeting between these families and the department of the interior and under no circumstances will registration as permanent residents be given them again.\*

It was also necessary to take further measures, chiefly to contact their former employers to ensure that they did not re-employ members of these families. The DNC [where they are at present] was warned of their efforts....and we received an assurance that under no circumstances would it allow these families to de-register from permanent residence there. Two families however do not make use of the flats allocated to them and are staying elsewhere temporarily.

All the families give the same reasons that they have got used to our town, their relatives are here and that firms here pay higher wages.

It must be added that all the families moved into very nice flats but that half of the families have already destroyed their flats, so the DNC has no interest in further families.

(143).

In 1967, when the transfer system was already faltering and natural migration to Czech urban areas was becoming even harder because

---

\* The 'Principles for organising the dispersal and transfer of the gypsy population' (83) required the "voluntary agreement" of the Gypsies involved, but this was often regarded as a technicality. Incidentally this particular case occurred in May 1970, six months after the policy of dispersal had been formally abandoned in the Czech lands.

of the housing shortage, a development occurred which, although it did not solve the would-be migrant's dilemma, at least offered him an alternative. As part of the general reforms a new economic management system was introduced in Czechoslovakian agriculture on January 1st 1967 which gave greater freedom to co-operatives from central planning and which was hoped would "create conditions for an influx of labour into agriculture". (Yearbook : 87, Vydra : 8). In this and successive measures constraints on co-operatives were removed which had previously restricted their activities to rural areas and to the field in which they had been originally established (i.e. agriculture) as well as limiting the free movement of their labour force. (Selucký : 101, 102).

In response a large number of co-operative farms set up in business as sub-contractors for construction work, recruiting gangs of labourers to travel on contract work all over the republic. Since co-operatives were able to pay their members on a profit-sharing basis, the long hours, arduous tasks and discomfort in often working far from home could be compensated by extremely high piece-work rates and bonuses. This form of economic organisation had a significant effect on the 'gypsy question' for not only did many Gypsies join co-op units but one of the concessions made to the newly-formed Gypsy associations in 1968 was that they, too, could operate a similar scheme. (See the following Chapter).

As regards the 1965 measures the greater freedom of the co-operatives was a disaster since it attracted many Gypsies away from fixed, regular employment and enabled them to travel the country as latter-day seasonal workers. From the very start of the assimilation campaign in 1958 the government had insisted that such mobility

could not provide the necessary re-educative influence and foster a stable way of life, yet a mid-1967 estimate put the number of Gypsies from Slovakia temporarily employed in the Czech lands at 10,000 (i.e. 10 per cent of the Republic's 101,700 Gypsies of productive age). (94).

From the considerably more limited perspective of urban Czech local authorities and employers the innovation of co-op labouring gangs appeared quite differently for it supplied much needed extra labour without the usual requirement of accompanying social costs. In place of expensive housing and education and health services for the workers' families it was sufficient to provide minimal barracks - or dormitory-type accommodation for the incoming 'temporary' workers - although such workers often remained for several years at a stretch. Yet even before the introduction of co-op production units Czech employers had recruited Gypsy workers without the prior agreement of NCs, sometimes accommodating them in the most rudimentary conditions. In June 1966 the Government Committee reported:

Firms [are often] ignorant of the principles for solving the gypsy questions and numerous cases occur of concrete acts against their spirit, e.g. the recent example of the Central Bohemia Power Authority which employed gypsies and housed them in caravans in Prague itself. (90).

For the Gypsies of Slovakia the innovation of co-op production units provided a means of earning the higher wages of Czech industrial or construction workers\* without needing to find scarce family

---

\* Although progress continued to be made in improving conditions in Slovakia to the level of those in the Czech lands, a 1968 survey revealed persistent inequalities. In a table of income by nationality the best-paid group were the Poles, concentrated in their heavy industrial enclave near Ostrava, second equal were the Czechs and - surprisingly - the Gypsies (largely due, no doubt, to their participation in co-op units) and in fourth place, the Slovaks. In terms of every other indicator (living standards, life style, education and complexity of work) the Gypsies came uniformly last. (Machonin : 537).



accommodation in town or city. True, it meant long periods of painful separation of wage-earners from their families - left behind in their Slovakian settlements - but at least these were not subjected to the hazards of squatting in derelict buildings, which was often the outcome when whole families attempted to migrate together as formerly.

In many ways the changing situation had modified the predicament of settlement Gypsies so that it resembled that of migrant workers to capitalist western Europe. Whilst it might seem absurd to compare Gypsies in Slovakia with chronically under-employed natives of Morocco, Turkey or Yugoslavia it remains true, nevertheless, that to many the difference between local employment possibilities and jobs in the Czech lands appeared great enough to make worthwhile the considerable hardship and suffering involved in migrating without their families. When living conditions in the Gypsy settlements are recalled, a comparison with the underdeveloped Mediterranean countries appears less ridiculous.

The formation of the co-op production units had a variable but often dramatic effect on Gypsy employment in Slovakia, as in the case of Spišská Nová Ves where there was a sharp fall in the number of Gypsies in regular employment by as much as a quarter during 1967.

Regularly employed Gypsies - Spišská Nová Ves (1966-1970)

|       | Date     | Total Gypsy pop. | Gypsies of productive age | Regularly employed | Temporarily employed |
|-------|----------|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| (116) | 21. 1.66 | 10,060           | -                         | 1,968              | -                    |
| (128) | 1. 2.67  | 10,200           | 4,448*                    | 2,040              | -                    |
| (130) | 31.12.67 | 10,249           | 4,087                     | 1,547              | 215                  |
| (160) | 31.12.68 | 10,633           | 4,320                     | 1,728              | -                    |
| (164) | 4.70     | -                | -                         | 1,759              | 358                  |

\* Almost certainly a mistake for the proportion in relation to total population is too large. In general these statistics are unreliable and difficult to interpret e.g. the figure for regularly employed Gypsies in November 1964 was 193 higher than the corresponding figure for January 1966. (55,116).

A 1968 report had no hesitation in attributing this fall in numbers to the appearance of co-op units.

The cause of the drop to the present state [of Gypsy employment figures]...can be attributed to the fact that many [Gypsies] voluntarily left their work and were re-employed by 'co-op production units' of the co-operative farms in the district. It has been ascertained that... a total of 523 [Gypsies] work there of which 176 in construction units in our district and 347 in construction units in the Czech lands.

(134).

However other factors were operating as well, such as the increasing lack of local employment possibilities. A 1970 survey commissioned by the Spišská Nová Ves DNC from the Advisory Institute of the Czech Commission for Scientific Control on the proposed economic development of the district noted that:

Despite an absolute rise in employed persons... the growth of job opportunities does not match the population growth in the district....Contrary to the national situation, reserves of labour exist. This raises specially acute problems in suitably employing Gypsies. [Some of the labour surplus must be absorbed locally and]...it will always be necessary to create new jobs...but a certain part of the population growth undoubtedly will be solved effectively by migration. (167)

The report showed that this situation had been worsening during the 1960s for in 1961 the migratory balance in favour of outmigration had been 317 but by 1967 had exceeded a thousand annually. "In recent years more than half of the natural population growth is absorbed by outmigration". (167).

In unfavourable employment situations such as this local authorities had previously been able to intervene sometimes on the Gypsies' behalf, insisting that firms employ a certain quota of Gypsy workers, but the new economic system removed this power. In 1967 the Government Committee

anticipated how some firms would make use of their increased autonomy as regards Gypsy workers.

There are, even now, many cases of outright refusal [by firms to employ gypsies] and there are justifiable fears that this situation will worsen when the new economic system is put into practice....

[At present] under Law 70/1958 DNCs can recommend that firms employ workers and in certain cases can decide on the responsibility of firms to employ them. However, in the case of Gypsies, firms generally give reasons which...[legally] permit them to refuse workers (such as their lack of physical or mental capacity or qualifications for the jobs they are intended to do).

The unwillingness of firms to accept gypsies and the limited possibilities of NCs to act against this are serious obstacles to carrying out dispersal and transfer. (94)

The proposals for amending Law 74 on nomadism had included a recommendation that NCs be given increased power to control firms for well before the introduction of the new economic system there had evidently been widespread resistance by employers. A survey of eleven Slovakian firms showed that while the total work force had risen from 41,000 to 52,000 in the two years from October 1964 until September 1966, during the same period the number of Gypsy employees had fallen from 1,970 to 1,788. (94).

As might have been expected the combination of a more competitive economy and greater autonomy of individual firms had a marked effect on the least desirable - and consequently most vulnerable - sections of the Gypsy labour force : women, the young and the disabled.

At a time when the total number of women in employment was steadily growing, both in the Spišská Nová Ves district and in Slovakia as a whole (167), the number of Gypsy women with a regular job - in Spišská Nová Ves at least - fell dramatically during 1967 and 1968.



Gypsy women regularly employed - Spišská Nová Ves  
(1967-68).

| Date                     | 21.1.66 | 1.2.67 | 31.12.67 | 31.12.68 |
|--------------------------|---------|--------|----------|----------|
| Women regularly employed | 118     | 121    | 80       | 38       |

(116)                      (128)                      (130)                      (160)

The same was true of young Gypsies, although some youths probably joined co-op production units at this time.

Employment of Young Gypsies - Spišská Nová Ves (1967-68).

|       |           |          | Regularly working |        |       | Not regularly working |        |       |
|-------|-----------|----------|-------------------|--------|-------|-----------------------|--------|-------|
|       | Age group | Date     | Total             | youths | girls | Total                 | youths | girls |
| (128) | 15-18     | 1. 2.67  | 89                | 73     | 16    | 495                   | 74     | 421   |
| (130) | 15-17     | 31.12.67 | 77                | 62     | 15    | 598                   | 281    | 317   |
| (160) | 15-17     | 31.12.68 | 18                | 18     | Ø     | 729                   | 355    | 374   |

In the same way that local authorities had sometimes been able to require that employers accept Gypsy workers, they had also been empowered to make them waive minimum qualifications for apprenticeships. However this was no longer to be the case.

The Ministry of Education and Culture issued an internal directive in 1962...to enable young gypsies to be accepted as apprentices even when they lacked the basic entrance requirements. Firms however do not observe this directive.... Under the new economic system...the placing of young gypsies will be even more difficult. (94)

In 1965 as much as 50 percent of all Gypsy school leavers in the Spišská Nová Ves district had been placed in apprenticeships (59) but from 1966 until 1969 this proportion never exceeded 20 per cent (113, 146, 164). Yet the previous policy of preferential apprenticeships for young Gypsies had often met with resistance from Gypsies themselves, for whom:

...the simple possibility of earning has the greatest influence. [Compared with the relatively low wages of an apprentice]...research in Ostrava [district 1] showed that an auxiliary worker of 16 to 18 years earns on average 1,100 crowns per month [and as a consequence] it appears more advantageous to [Gypsy] parents if their children start paid work immediately, rather than enter apprenticeships. (92).

Bleakest of all were the employment prospects of the partially-disabled Gypsy invalid pensioners (2,360 in 1967 (94)) whose situation appeared liable to deteriorate further as the proposed changes to the national economy were introduced.

#### The Failure of the New Administrative Structure

The growing divergence, during the period 1966-1969, of NC performance from the ambitious earlier plans has already been described in the key areas of population transfer, accommodation and employment, but perhaps the simplest single indicator of local authority inactivity is the failure by NCs to make use of the funds already allocated to them for the purpose of solving the 'gypsy question'.

The figures for the Spišská Nová Ves district are regrettably incomplete but nevertheless the difference is striking between the performance of 1966, when expenditure actually exceeded the budget, and 1969, when during the first six months less than 6 per cent of the annual budget was utilised.

DNC Budget and Expenditure for Gypsy Affairs- Spišská Nová Ves (1966-1969)

(in thousands of crowns)

| Year        | 1966 (124) | 1967 (125,130) | 1968 (146) | 1969 (162) |
|-------------|------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| Budget      | 2,563      | 2,985          | 1,500      | 2,640      |
| Expenditure | 2,592      | 1,179*         | 989**      | 147.2***   |

\* Expenditure for hut purchases only. However in 1966 this item had accounted for 78% of all expenditure.

\*\* Expenditure for I-IX. 68 only.

\*\*\* " " I-VII. 69 only.

RNC Budget and Expenditure for Gypsy Affairs- North Moravia Region (1968-1969)

(in thousands of crowns)

| Year       |             | 1968  | 1969* |
|------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Bruntal    | Budget      | 395   | 290   |
| DNC        | Expenditure | 15    | -     |
| Karvina    | B.          | 117   | 116   |
| DNC        | E.          | 90    | 50    |
| Vsetín     | B.          | 450   | 105   |
| DNC        | E.          | 157   | 105   |
| Ostrava    | B.          | 445   | 310   |
| DNC        | E.          | 110   | 13    |
| DNCs       | B.          | 3,109 | 2,283 |
| total**    | E.          | 758   | 120   |
| N.Mor.Reg. | B.          | 4,700 | 3,438 |
| TOTAL      | E.          | 758   | 122   |

\* Expenditure for I-VI. 69 only.

\*\* Separate figures are given above for only four of the region's ten DNCs. In 1968 the expenditure of these four accounted for 49% of that of all DNCs.



The North Moravia Region statistics tell the same story. In 1968 only 16 per cent of the budget was utilised, while in the first half of the following year this proportion of the annual budget was a miniscule  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. To put this in proportion, the region's total outlay on Gypsy affairs from January to June 1969 was roughly equivalent to the price of a new car.

The extent to which the poor performance of NCs in carrying out the 1965 measures is due to broader political developments during this period is not easy to assess : certainly they had the direct effect of encouraging local authority resistance to central government.

During the mid-1960s the prospects of success for the Gypsy policy of assimilation by dispersal were already deteriorating as a direct result of contemporary economic developments. The balance of new house-building was altering in favour of the more expensive privately-owned co-operative flats whilst central controls over employers were progressively removed allowing, on the one hand, some firms to refuse the Gypsy workers and apprentices they did not want, but, on the other, the new co-op production units to recruit Gypsies as casual labourers to travel the country in mobile gangs.

But reforms in the economic sphere did not, and could not, fail to extend into the political sphere and finally they led, in early 1968, to the overthrow of the Novotný regime that had ruled the Republic since 1957. The process of undermining and eventually ousting the entrenched dirigiste leadership was a prolonged campaign of attrition, extending from the first economic reforms of 1964 that were introduced after the collapse of the five-year plan. The nucleus of central government acquiesced uneasily to the new economic measures

which necessarily involved considerable devolution of its powers - for it could see no alternative - yet continued to act outwardly as if nothing had changed. A leading Czech economist graphically described this remarkable situation as it was in 1967:

The power centre tried to manage the national economy by directive methods, but its orders were being fulfilled only by the ministries; the command system was, by then, already so eroded that it failed to affect the economic units. It was a paradoxical situation: the old system had already ceased to function. The political command system also began to disintegrate as quickly. Most of the decisions of the top power bodies were being fulfilled only formally because the enforcing apparatus was in part decomposed and in part divided into two opinion groups. Because the system was no longer able to enforce compliance with its orders by power-political means, its mechanism began to falter.

(Selucký : 89. Emphasis in original).

This almost total collapse of the command system was bound to affect the implementation of the Gypsy policy. In Slovakia the weakening of central control and the consequently greater involvement of the electorate in political life made elected NC officials acutely sensitive to grass-roots pressure, particularly in the turbulent year of 1968. A report in November of that year explained the poor performance of Slovakian NCs in dispersing Gypsies locally by:

...the greater respect paid to the wishes of the [non-Gypsy] people - especially in smaller villages. As in the past these people, for the most part, refuse to accept Gypsy families among themselves in the village.

The same report continued:

In the first three or four months of this year [1968] NC officials did not pay attention to the question [of the gypsy population] for tactical reasons. Some did not want to lose popularity with their electors by solving this unpopular question...in the pre-election period. [The elections were originally to be in May and were later postponed until August]. Others - who were not standing for election - did

not fulfil the tasks shown in the work timetable in the belief that no-one would criticise them for not having undertaken these tasks. (146)

But Czech NCs were no better, for:

From May [1968]...Czech DNC partners [of Slovak DNCs] refused...to accept the gypsy families prepared for transfer from Slovakia and to the contrary in places pressed for the return to Slovakia of those already settled. This had even occurred during the previous year [1967]. (146)

This was the harsh verdict of the Slovak central authorities but their Czech counterparts' view was not dissimilar, although not so outrightly critical.

Political and constitutional changes during 1968 affected the completion of the tasks in solving the gypsy question both centrally and locally... [and] the Government Committee did not meet even once during 1968. (140).

Somewhat later, in April 1970, another major Slovakian report seemed to lay the entire blame for the collapse of the dispersal and transfer programme on the malevolent intent of local authorities who were able to ignore the 1965 measures because of the deteriorating political situation.

Local officials wanted nothing more than to get rid of their own Gypsies with the help of Government Decree 502/1965...

The failure to fulfil the planned tasks cannot be attributed, in any way, to [this] decree...but solely to those [entrusted with carrying them out]... The desire, the will and the involvement of elected officials, likewise of responsible administrators on every level of state bodies or social organisations, can be evaluated positively only in exceptional cases as regards the Gypsy question. (147)

It is impossible to absolve the 1965 measures in this way for the principal shortcoming before 1965 had been the lack of control over



local authorities. The main purpose, therefore, of the administrative re-organisation of 1965 was to improve this on a local and national level, by attaching advisory committees directly to DNC and RNC councils and by creating an overall co-ordinating body, the Government Committee, which was to report directly to the Government Praesidium.

The Government Committee itself was initially very active and although it only met four times in the fifteen months between December 1965 and April 1967, it issued a number of major documents and discussed plans of the Ministries of Education and Health, the Social Security Office and the trade union movement. The dispersal and transfer plans and budgets up to 1970 were also prepared and agreed. Law 117, which enabled family allowances to be withheld when the children in question did not attend school regularly, was recommended to and passed by the National Assembly in December 1966, although the proposal to amend law 74 was less successful.

In practice, however, Law 117 was as ineffective as Law 74 had been and for the similar reason that its use entailed additional responsibilities for NCs. For example Law 117 was used in the North Bohemia Region only 94 times in the period 1966-1968.

The reason [for the infrequent use of Law 117] is the work involved for NCs in applying it. Usually child welfare departments have responsibility but these are still understaffed. Also [its use provokes] ...unpleasantness or even aggressive behaviour from [Gypsy] parents. (140).

Meanwhile the Government Committee's counterpart in Slovakia, the Slovakian National Council Committee, met several times and, among other things, issued a directive on the compulsory purchase of Gypsy huts. (94).

For the first time a concerted effort was made to gain new factual knowledge about the dimensions of the Gypsy problem by the compilation of statistics and by sociological research. The Government Committee admitted: "We do not know in what the gypsy way of life and its perpetuation are rooted for that has to be established by sociological research; we only see they are undesirable". (90). However, since "for the present neither [the Czechoslovak nor Slovak Academy of Sciences] shows any interest in carrying out research" (90), it was proposed to set up a small team as part of the Government Committee section, to do immediate, if limited, sociological research. Before this could be arranged, however, statistics were required on Gypsy apprentices "but the Central Committee for the People's Controls and Statistics refused the survey". (92).

In 1967 both major scientific academies were still unwilling to undertake research and so it was proposed to set up an eight or nine-member research team as part of the Slovak National Council's Advisory Committee section.

If the Government Committee was unfortunate in obtaining outside research co-operation, it did manage to gather data from NCs. Slovak NCs had already made a survey in 1964 but Czech NCs compiled fresh statistics from their residence registration cards and, taken together, these gave the first national statistical picture of the 'Gypsy problem'. The use of registration cards as source documents undoubtedly led to errors for they were often out of data and in particular showed where Gypsies were registered rather than where they were actually resident, but nevertheless it was a considerable achievement.

A year later, in December 1967, and again in December 1968, the State Statistical Office produced its own detailed census of Gypsies in Czechoslovakia.

After a promising start, the activity of the Government Committee declined sharply in 1967 and the committee did not meet once in 1968. The production of the April 1967 report (94) was its last major act. To the last the Government Committee remained convinced that "experience to date confirms the correctness of the measures taken by the government to solve the gypsy question" (94), yet only a year after making this assessment the Committee had effectively ceased to function and the dispersal and transfer programme was almost at a standstill.

This collapse was due not only to external causes - the contemporaneous political crisis - but was also the result of structural weaknesses which would have gravely jeopardised the success of the 1965 measures, even had there been no general breakdown of the command system. These weaknesses were analogous to the inherent faults of the administrative structure in the time of Maria Theresa, indeed the parallel was remarkable.

The seemingly powerful Imperial Governor's Council had sought to impose assimilation of the Gypsies by numerous decrees and assiduous report-gathering but had been ultimately frustrated by the local Diets' unwillingness to carry out measures contrary to their own interests. Not only had the Council been unable to enforce effective dispersal of Gypsies among the serfs but it was unaware of the degree of failure of its policies, for, without the means of independently evaluating the reports it received, it could not penetrate the Diets' mask of compliant activity. Meanwhile the Gypsies were alienated by



the harshness of the measures intended to achieve the policy aims, even though their own ambitions were not always far removed from some of those main aims (such as settling and employment). So, in a different way, the Gypsies added their resistance to that of the Diets.

Two centuries later the corresponding co-ordinating body, the Government Committee, which had been established in order to extend firm central control over the local authority network, was likewise unable to enforce its instructions and its authority proved illusory.\* The Government Committee could not "control how basic directives were being followed", as instructed in Decree 502/1965, for - in spite of the appearance of dual control - the regional and district committees for Gypsy affairs were directly responsible only to their own NCs. Even the full-time secretaries of these committees - the impressive-sounding 'plenipotentiaries for questions of the gypsy population' - were nominated by their own NCs, paid by them and not by central government, and eventually hoped to be rewarded by a less frustrating post within their NCs.

Equally, the Government Committee was unable "to monitor the overall solution" (84) with any reliability, for, although equipped with its own small secretariat, it did not have the staff (nor probably the authority) to make its own investigations into NC performance, but had to rely entirely on reports submitted by the very bodies it was meant to be controlling. It is doubtful what use the

---

\* The same was true of the Slovakian National Council Committee.

Government Committee could have made of independent data in any case because, like NC committees for Gypsy affairs, its status was advisory and not executive. At most, it could only report periodically on general developments to the over-worked Government Praesidium which, in turn, sporadically responded with broad policy pronouncements.

The impotence of the Government Committee was typified by its feeble response to flagrant administrative sabotage of the 1965 measures by NCs. Whereas on occasions Slovakian RNCs had previously argued that deliberate opposition by NCs to the assimilation policy should be treated as a 'breach of state discipline', all the Government Committee could suggest was to improve propaganda!

The significance and importance of further intensifying and improving propaganda...is confirmed by the fact that to a considerable degree the public, NC officials and employees, firms and social organisations still retain their old, incorrect opinions about Gypsies and solving the gypsy question. An expression of these incorrect opinions is the lack of interest...and sometimes even resistance to solving the problem. (94).

Day-to-day control of actual performance rested with NCs themselves while the Government Committee could only attempt a monitoring operation on the basis of whatever information NCs chose to give it. Success of the 1965 measures depended, as before, on the attitude of individual NCs and the resources available to them, not on any firm control from central government as the 1965 measures had seemed to promise.

On a local level pre-1965 Slovakian experience had already shown that the direct attachment of advisory committees to NC councils did not, by itself, solve the problem of NC inactivity. Although the administrative reorganisation undoubtedly increased the potential

influence of these committees, they were largely composed of NC officials - often apathetic or actively hostile to the 1965 measures. Even if such committees did attempt to be active, they were thwarted by their advisory status for they had no executive powers of their own. They were powerless if NC councils chose to ignore their advice - as they frequently did.

In theory RNC councils were empowered to control their subordinate DNCs (and likewise DNCs their subordinate MMCs and LNCs) but instances of such intervention were rare and even then most commonly took the form of an ineffectual reprimand.

As had been the case in Habsburg times the very authorities designated as the main agents of the assimilation policy were probably its most effective opponents and, as then, their opposition most probably stemmed from the fact that implementation of the planned measures would have placed new and severe strains on their finances - in other words it would have cost them ~~them~~ money.

Even after 1965, when funds were made available from the central exchequer, to have rehoused Gypsies on the scale proposed, for example, would have been to diminish the already scarce resources available for those whom NC officials regarded as their own people, for the general shortage of housing and building materials continued to be critical.

However this general explanation is not entirely adequate and the influence of outright racialism cannot be discounted, particularly in Slovakia where numerous local authorities steadfastly refused to allow Gypsies to live in the village proper on any terms. There, many officials had grown up in an atmosphere where Gypsies had been regarded as sub-human and rigorously segregated wherever possible. The same attitudes



often persisted in spite of socialism, as is evident from reading between the lines of local authority reports.

Unable to admit openly to their prejudices or, in some cases, fearful to confess their reluctance to take unpopular action, the local authorities played the same game with the Government Committee as had the Diets with the Imperial Governor's Council.

Initially awed by the formidable appearance of Government Decree no. 502/1965 and the new Government Committee, many NCs greatly increased their activity in 1966, utilising a good deal of the funds allocated to them. They soon discovered that in practice the effective control over their performance was no better than before and during the following year abandoned their caution, lapsing once more into token compliance with a policy in which they had no faith.

In this they were undoubtedly aided by political developments at the time but these wider changes were more a convenient tool than the principal cause of the policy's failure. Local authorities had successfully frustrated the 1958 measures; there was no real reason why they could not do the same with those of 1965.

Once again the Gypsies were the losers in the tussle between central and local government and although blamed by both sides as the main cause of the breakdown of the policy, this was not true. The Gypsies cherished ambitions which were not dissimilar to some of the main policy aims; they desperately wanted socio-economic equalisation which meant for them in concrete terms such things as new houses, better jobs and, above all, respect. To achieve these more rapidly many Gypsies had already moved to the Czech lands, yet they did not want to be directed to remote rural areas far from well-paid industrial

jobs and kin, nor to be tied indefinitely to one employer or one flat for circumstances changed.

In the event the Government Committee plans had little relevance for the majority of Gypsies who, instead, were confronted with a strengthened armoury of bureaucratic restrictions in the hands of their customary adversaries, the local authorities. These the Gypsies combat<sub>ed</sub> in the only way open to them, by taking matters into their own hands where possible and presenting the authorities with a 'fait accompli'.

The structural defects in the 1965 reorganisation, the skil<sub>ful</sub> manipulation of them by NCs and the continued evasion of regulations by Gypsies all suggest that, rather than being a well-conceived policy hopelessly overwhelmed by external events, the 1965 measures already carried within them the seeds of their own destruction.

### The Results

The dispersal and transfer programme did not come to any sudden or definite end; it simply petered out at varying rates in different areas during 1968 and 1969. The problem of selecting even a nominal date for the end of the programme is further increased by the federalisation of the Republic which took effect from January 1st 1969 and had the practical consequence of a slower run-down of the 1965 programme in Slovakia than in the Czech lands. At the same time it can be said that in some places, in spite of dutiful form-filling by the appropriate local authority officials, the programme never even started.

Another and more serious problem is that of comparative data. A number of government reports in 1968 and later give nation-wide statistics, which are supplemented by the special Gypsy censuses of December 1967 and 1968 and also - to some extent - by the national census of 1970, but there exists no data of comparable range or reliability for the pre-1965 period.

As regards certain post-1968 statistics - budget utilisation, completed transfers and dispersals, unplanned migration, rehousing and provision of amenities in settlements - these can at least be compared with the corresponding planned figures in the national timetable for the programme approved by Government Decree 159/1967. (98). The comparisons made in this section are more or less specific to a limited evaluation of the effectiveness of the 1965 measures; the much broader and more important question of changes in the overall living standards of Gypsies during this period - involving statistics on population levels, employment, health, education and crime - is put aside until the following chapter.

#### i) Budget Utilisation

The experience of Spišská Nová Ves and the North Moravia Region was evidently quite typical of the national trend. The pattern was initial promise in 1966, followed by rapidly deteriorating results in 1967 and 1968. The proportion of the overall 1967-1970 budget for the 33 months from January 1967 until October 1969 was 393,017,000 crowns but by the end of this period only 25.6 per cent of the allocated funds had been used.



Gypsy affairs - NC Budget and expenditure (1967-70). (137)

(in thousands of crowns).

|         |             | 1967    | 1968   | 1969 (I-IX) | Total   |
|---------|-------------|---------|--------|-------------|---------|
| 1967-70 | Budget      | 119,108 | -      | -           | 571,661 |
| 1967-69 | Expenditure | 54,000  | 37,000 | 9,757       | 100,757 |

The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs report, which gave these figures, added:

The sharply falling trend shows not only the gradually contracting possibility of realising the measures originally planned, but the bad results of these forms of solution. Districts which were to accept transferred Gypsies defended themselves, the supply of houses suitable for rehousing Gypsies shrank, and [districts] made no attempt to keep those Gypsies already transferred, who moved home again or on to other places to other clansmen. (137).

ii) Transfers

In a 1969 report (140), the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs claimed a 45 per cent overall success rate in transferring Gypsies during the three years from 1966 to 1968. This optimistic assessment also showed the sharp decline in performance year by year. (See the following table).

Although all of these statistics are to some extent unreliable - in that they frequently fail to tally with each other - this purported success rate is almost certainly too high because the base figure from which it was calculated is suspiciously low. The 1969 Czech

report gave a total of 1,091 Gypsy families planned for transfer from Slovakia to the Czech lands during the 1966-1968 period at the rate of roughly 350 families a year but the original plan for the four-year period 1967-1970 showed 2,177 families to be transferred at the considerably higher rate of over 500 families a year. (97). Likewise a Slovakian report for the comparable but slightly earlier four-year period 1966-1969 gave a figure of 1,975 families - also around 500 families a year (147). Using these figures the overall fulfillment of the transfer plan for the 1966-1968 period should not be the 45 per cent given in the Czech report but only 33 per cent (on the basis of 1,500 planned transfers).

iii) Dispersals and Unplanned Migration

The figures for dispersals are much harder to evaluate. The impressive 81 per cent success rate claimed for Slovakia should be revised to 67 per cent on the basis of a calculation similar to that made for transfers. According to the original 1967-70 plan a total of 5,948 families were to be dispersed during the four-year period, giving 4,461 families during three years instead of 3,700, as stated in the 1969 report. Apart from discrepancies in the planned total, doubt is cast on the numbers actually dispersed for a Slovakian report noted that during the first nine months of 1968 only 35 Gypsy families were dispersed in Slovakia. (146).

Again, what Slovakian authorities actually meant by a dispersal is highly problematic; perhaps those who went with the proceeds of their hut sales as unplanned migrants to the Czech lands figured as successful 'dispersals' in Slovakian statistics.

Figures for dispersals in the Czech lands are no less confusing but discrepancies here are of little importance since the planned dispersal of a few hundred Gypsy families was dwarfed by the perpetual problem of unplanned migration, both within the Czech lands and from Slovakia. Local authorities proved as incapable of controlling Gypsy population movement after the 1965 measures as they had before them and during the three years from 1966 to 1968 there were over three times as many recorded unplanned moves by Gypsies into and within the Czech lands as there were planned moves. (140).

The scale of population movement involved is difficult to grasp at first but the 1969 report tried to put this in perspective.

In comparison with [planned] transfers, which... dropped sharply from 1966 to 1968, unplanned migration remained at roughly the same level each year....If we add together the number of families who changed their residence..., whether by planned transfer and dispersal or unplanned migration, we reach a surprising high figure. It is roughly 3,000 families (i.e. probably 16,800 Gypsies which, for comparison, is probably a third of all Gypsies in the Czech lands in 1965). In most cases NCs had to deal with their accommodation and other problems during the past three years [1966-1968]. (140).

Additional light was thrown on Gypsy migratory patterns by the special censuses of Gypsies in December 1967 and December 1968, which gave statistics of Gypsy movement for the current year. On the whole these confirmed expectations - that the rate of internal Gypsy migration was much higher within the Czech lands than within Slovakia and that more unplanned Gypsy migrants moved from Slovakia to the Czech lands than in the opposite direction, although less so in 1968.\*

---

\* This did not amount to a reversal of migratory flow as in the case of Spišská Nová Ves and the N. Moravia region.



Transfer and dispersal of Gypsy families - Plan and Reality (1966-68). (140).

|                        | Plan  | Reality | % fulfilled | % fulfilled by year |      |      | Remained in new residence |     |
|------------------------|-------|---------|-------------|---------------------|------|------|---------------------------|-----|
|                        |       |         |             | 1966                | 1967 | 1968 | fams.                     | %   |
| Transfers              | 1,091 | 494     | 45%         | 85%                 | 51%  | 20%  | 385                       | 78% |
| Dispersals (Cz. lands) | 436   | 235     | 54%         | 70%                 | 56%  | 47%  | 202                       | 86% |
| Dispersals (Slovakia)  | 3,700 | 3,000   | 81%         | -                   | -    | -    | -                         | -   |
| Total - Czechoslovakia | 5,227 | 3,729   | 71%         | -                   | -    | -    | -                         | -   |

Comparison of planned and unplanned population movement (1966-68). (140).

| Movement type          |                                  | Czech lands                      |                                       |     |                              | * Slovakia (147)<br>(families) |  | Czechoslovakia<br>(families) |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
|                        |                                  | Realised movements<br>(families) | Of which remained<br>in new residence |     | Slovakia (147)<br>(families) |                                |  |                              |
|                        |                                  |                                  | families                              | %   |                              |                                |  |                              |
| Planned<br>movements   | Transfers                        | 494                              | 385                                   | 78% | -                            | 494                            |  |                              |
|                        | Dispersals                       | 235                              | 202                                   | 86% | 3,786                        | 4,021                          |  |                              |
|                        | Total                            | 729                              | 587                                   | 80% | 3,786                        | 4,515                          |  |                              |
| Unplanned<br>movements | Within country                   | 1,154 <sup>+</sup>               | -                                     | -   | ?                            | -                              |  |                              |
|                        | Between countries                | 1,096 <sup>+</sup>               | -                                     | -   | 381                          | 1,477                          |  |                              |
|                        | Total                            | 2,250                            | 1,330 x                               | 59% | -                            | -                              |  |                              |
| All<br>movements       | Total                            | 2,979                            | 1,917**                               | 64% | -                            | -                              |  |                              |
|                        | % of total =<br>planned movement | 25%                              | 31%                                   | -   | -                            | -                              |  |                              |

Notes:

\* Totals for Slovakia are for the period 1966-1969.

+ Estimates based on 1967 Census : table 37. The second figure (1096) is for migrations to the Czech lands from Slovakia, while (381) in the same row is to Slovakia.

x "Some of these were helped by NCs....and others had to leave" (140).

\*\* 2,479 flats were allocated to Gypsies in 1967 and 1968 in the Czech lands. (140).

Gypsy Migration (1967). (1967 Census : Table 36).

(persons)

| Area           | Migrating Gypsies (persons) |                    |                      | % of total<br>G.population<br>migrating<br>within country<br>* * | % of total<br>pop.migrating<br>within country<br>** |
|----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--|---|
|                | Total                       | Within<br>country* | Between<br>countries |  |   |
| Czechoslovakia | 6,668x                      | 2,440              | 4,221                | 2.99   | 1.59  |
| Czech lands    | 4,708                       | 1,530              | 3,178+               | 2.64   | 1.63  |
| Slovakia       | 1,953                       | 910                | 1,043+               | 0.55   | 0.89  |

Notes:

- \* Migrations within the district are not included in this table and since the majority of planned dispersals were within the district, these are not shown here.
- + The second row shows immigration to the Czech lands from Slovakia.  
The third row shows immigration to Slovakia from the Czech lands.
- x This figure is compatible with the 16,800 quoted above for the three-year period 1966-1968 (140). However another 1970 source (137) gave a much higher figure of 27,419 total Gypsy migrants for the same period, although proportions of migration types were similar.
- \*\* These percentages are for total migrants (i.e. within country plus between country but not including those who moved only within their district, of course).



These censuses also provided a useful comparison with non-Gypsies. The 1967 census revealed that although migration within Slovakia was less than within the Czech lands for Gypsies and the total population alike, this difference was far more pronounced in the case of Gypsies. The proportion of Gypsies migrating within the same country was five times greater among Gypsies in the Czech lands than among Gypsies in Slovakia, whilst amongst the total population the corresponding difference in proportions was only double. Indeed the rate of internal migration within Slovakia was lower for Gypsies than for the total population.

The figure of Gypsy migrants to the Czech lands from Slovakia included at most 1,000 Gypsies in planned transfers. Therefore this census suggested that in 1967 there were at least twice as many Gypsies migrating to the Czech lands from Slovakia without authorisation as there were returning to Slovakia from the Czech lands.

iv) Eliminating sub-standard Gypsy dwellings and rehousing Gypsy families.

This problem mainly concerned the Gypsy settlements of Slovakia and yet again a downward revision of the targets in the original 1967-1970 plan (97) allowed relatively high success rates to be claimed in subsequent reports. If the initial targets are resubstituted, the rate for eliminating sub-standard dwellings drops from 67.1 per cent to 52.5 per cent for the four-year 1966-1969 period and likewise the rate for rehousing Gypsy families from 59.6 per cent to 52.2 per cent. The following table shows the officially claimed rates however.

Eliminating Gypsy dwellings and rehousing Gypsy families -Plan and Reality (1966-1969).

|            |               | 1966-1969         | 1966 - 1968          |                          |
|------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
|            |               | Slovakia<br>(147) | Czech lands<br>(140) | Czechoslovakia*<br>(140) |
| Unhygienic | Total (97)    | 12,500            | 1,748                | 14,248                   |
| Gypsy      | Plan.elim.    | 5,314             | 919                  | 4,919                    |
| Dwellings  | Reality       | 3,568             | 689 <sup>+</sup>     | -                        |
|            | % fulfilled   | 67.1%             | -                    | -                        |
| Gypsy      | Total (97)    | 16,500            | 2,119                | 18,619                   |
| families   | Plan.rehoused | 7,183             | 436                  | 5,236                    |
| to be      | Reality       | 4,280             | 235                  | 3,729                    |
| rehoused   | % fulfilled   | 59.6%             | 54%                  | 71.2%                    |

\* The totals for Czechoslovakia are compiled using 1966-68 figures for Slovakia from (140).

+ Figure for 1967 and 1968 only.

Of the ambitious plan to eliminate by 1970 over six hundred of the 1027 'undesirable gypsy concentrations' in Slovakia (i.e. 60 per cent) there was little mention and certainly no table of detailed results. The 1969 Slovakian report (147) listed 927 such concentrations which meant that by December 1969 less than 10 per cent had been eliminated.

v) The Construction of Amenities in Gypsy Settlements

Once more, initial targets were lowered to produce more flattering results. If the 1967 targets of 284 wells and 537 wCs for the four-year period 1967-1970 are substituted for their counterparts for the 1966-1969 period, the extent to which the plans were fulfilled drops to 58.8 and 48 per cent respectively. Another rather more graphic way of measuring performance is to match the amenities constructed against the total of 'undesirable gypsy concentrations' listed in 1969: for example one new well was provided for every fifth such concentration, one new toilet for every third.

Other targets given by the 1969 Slovakian report - for road building, electrical connections, public lighting and stream regulation - remained the same as in the 1967 plan. (97). This lends support to the practice of comparing directly the figures for the two overlapping four-year periods.

Construction of basic amenities in Gypsy settlements  
in Slovakia - (1966-1969). (147).

|             | Wells | WCs  | Roads(Km) | Elect.<br>connections | Public<br>lighting | Regulation<br>of streams |
|-------------|-------|------|-----------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Plan        | 227   | 387  | 120       | 70                    | 43                 | 26                       |
| Realised    | 167   | 258  | 63        | 14                    | 21                 | 4                        |
| % fulfilled | 73.5  | 66.7 | 52.5      | 20.0                  | 48.9               | 15.4                     |



An Assessment of the Effectiveness of the 1965 Measures.

Judged at their most basic level - as an attempt to scatter physically large numbers of Gypsies by means of a planned programme of population transfer and dispersal, funded by the central exchequer and co-ordinated and enforced by an improved administrative structure - the 1965 measures were as ineffectual as their 1958 predecessors had been.

The most dramatic element of the plan - to lighten Slovakia's load by the transfer of some 500 Gypsy families a year to the Czech lands - was an almost total failure. Yet even had the plan worked in its entirety it could not have kept pace with the natural population growth in Slovakia; the reservoir of Gypsy settlements was filling at a faster rate than it could be emptied, as the Government Committee realised in its April 1967 report.

The transfer of part of the gypsy population to the Czech regions, as envisaged in the planned timetable, provides only limited assistance to the overall solution for fulfilment of the programme does not cover even the expected natural growth of the gypsy population of Slovakia in the years 1966-1970. (94)

In the event the number of families transferred during the whole period amounted to less than 500 in all and of these almost a quarter failed to remain at their new destination.

Local dispersals appeared more successful but, leaving aside arguments about the extent to which various planned targets had been approached, the direct impact of the transfer and dispersal programme on the Gypsy population as a whole was strictly limited. Even if the questionable Slovakian statistics for dispersals are taken at their face value the number of Gypsies involved in transfers and dispersals

was at most 22,500 (i.e. 4,500 families). This was less than 10 per cent of the Republic's Gypsy population (1968 Census) and only half the proportion that was intended to benefit from these measures. (97). Meanwhile this restricted level of planned population movement was dwarfed in significance by natural migration, which appeared to continue more or less unchecked as before.

The re-organised administrative structure, on which the success of the 1965 measures depended, proved wholly inadequate to the task. The impotence of the co-ordinating Government Committee was evident in the declining rate of transfer and dispersal and even more so in the low level of budget utilisation by local authorities. This meant, among other things, the deterioration of conditions in the settlements as the growing population steadily increased pressure on already scarce amenities.

Had the Government Committee not lapsed into inaction well before its formal dissolution in December 1968, all it could have done after the initial agreement of the programme would have been to monitor the ruin of its plans.

CHAPTER SIX.AFTERMATH : RECONSIDERATION OF THE 1958 POLICY

(1968- )

|   | <u>Page</u> |
|---|-------------|
| THE RE-EMERGENCE OF THE NATIONAL QUESTION ... ..  | 344         |
| THE IMPACT OF FEDERALISATION ... ..   | 350         |
| THE SITUATION OF THE GYPSIES AFTER A DECADE OF<br>ASSIMILATIONISM ... ..                          | 354         |
| DEVELOPMENTS AFTER 1968 ... ..  | 363         |
| - Re-evaluation in the Czech Lands ... ..   | 363         |
| - The Policy of Acculturation in Slovakia ... ..  | 374         |
| - The Rise and Fall of the Gypsy Associations... ..   | 379         |
| THE ASSESSMENT OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT SINCE 1958 BY THE<br>CZECHOSLOVAK ACADEMY OF SCIENCES ... .. | 391         |
| APPENDIX 'A' - Some Tables of Post-1967 Statistics ...  | 401         |
| APPENDIX 'B' - National and Local Government Documents..  | 407         |
| References for Chapters Four to Six. ... ..   | 421         |



CHAPTER SIXAFTERMATH : RECONSIDERATION OF THE 1958 POLICY(1968- )THE RE-EMERGENCE OF THE NATIONAL QUESTION

If economic failure had demoralised and weakened the Novotný regime to the point that it could be overthrown, ever-present Slovak nationalism provided much of the impetus that allowed this opportunity for change to be seized. Novotný's policy to repress all separatist aspirations whilst hopefully undermining them by purely economic measures proved a failure and from 1963 onwards accumulated Slovak grievances played a major role in challenging and eventually ousting his leadership. Consequently a central aspect of the political reforms of 1968 was the correction of the centralist trend of the previous twenty years or more.

This re-emergence of the national question concerned not only the Slovaks but other minority nationalities and the Gypsies too. The Gypsy leaders and their sympathisers who had formerly campaigned for Gypsy cultural associations and recognition of the Gypsy language renewed their demands. An important 1968 article by a leading Czech Gypsiologist recalled their past efforts.

In April 1960 a group of the Bratislava Gypsy intelligentsia (a doctor, a philosopher, a builder, a musician, an artistic craftsman and an official) sent a letter to the government of Czechoslovakia in which they requested that Gypsies be recognised as a nationality, that they be permitted to form a cultural association of Czechoslovak Gypsies so that they might have their own artistic [musical and dance] group and might publish their own journal (like Gypsies in the USSR, Bulgaria, Hungary, France etc.)

(Hübschmannová : 33)

According to the criteria in operation from 1958 onwards these people were not regarded technically as Gypsies since their level of education and employment indicated that they were 'successfully assimilated'. Evidently this was not how they regarded themselves for their letter was bitterly critical of the development of policy towards Gypsies since the war and in particular of the repressive nature of the 1958 policy.\*

After 1945 things improved [for Gypsies] in Czechoslovakia but as time went on various party and government measures did not achieve the expected [results]....This was mainly because Gypsies did not have their own organisation, which would have helped in a responsible way in solving the so-called gypsy questions.

Administrative measures like forcible resettling, planning how many Gypsies there should be and where, only increased the difficulties of co-existence in our society. Up till now the measures to solve the problems have been more [a display of] power than they should have been. Very often the so-called gypsy questions have been solved without the participation of Gypsy-Roms. For this reason we have proposed the formation of a cultural educational organisation in Czechoslovakia - the Association of Czechoslovak Gypsy-Roms.

(quoted Hubschmannová : 33)

The letter went on to challenge the long-term goal of 'assimilation' as understood in 1958, and in its place suggested a more humane and also realistic policy of pluralist development which could replace conflict by co-existence between Gypsies and non-Gypsies.

---

\* The Gypsiologist was even more outspoken in her condemnation:

Who divides Gypsies into groups? Who stamps and sorts them? Who decides if they live a 'typically gypsy life' or if they are 'suitable enough' to move?  
(Hubschmannová : 39)

What do we [Gypsies] really want? And what do the [non-Gypsy] official representatives want?

Do we want to avoid conflict and that we-non-Gypsies and Gypsies alike - should participate in our common society? Or do we want Gypsies to 'assimilate' which - as it has been understood up till now and is still understood - presupposes that they must surrender their own values, their own language, their own folk-lore and their own interests?

Is such an assimilation as this necessary?

(ibid.)

Polemics such as this struck a chord in the popular press where feature-writers began to probe the question of the appalling conditions in the Gypsy settlements of Slovakia. The previous tones of indignant self-righteousness or, alternatively, of smug optimism were replaced by unease and even guilt that such things were possible. Some journalists even tried to image what it must feel like to be Gypsies living under such conditions with little apparent hope of escape.

I have already walked through many settlements. Everywhere I met Gypsies either sad or wild with grief. Even when they sometimes attacked me with an axe or cooking knife it was a despairing torment which gave them courage. And always enough people could be found who were concerned that nothing should happen to me. So I came among true Gypsies and in their anger and their grief they were proud.

(Sidon).

And so, if the slackening of political control during 1968 allowed 'racist'\* NCs to neglect their tasks of transferring, dispersing and rehousing Gypsies, at least there was the compensation that 'liberal uncritical pseudohumanists'\* could at last express their views in print.

---

\* Sus' terminology for these two kinds of opponent of the assimilation policy. (Sus : 111).



The government had found little difficulty in silencing the critics of its Gypsy policy after 1958 but a decade later all the Government Committee could do was utter feeble protests.

The national press has started to write about the problems of gypsy questions. The activity of this section of the press must be judged inadequate and in some examples considerably subjective. Some articles (e.g. in Literární Listy, Tvorba, Slovenka) judged the situation in Slovakia one-sidedly, only paying attention to the negative aspects. (94).

The eventual outcome of nationalist pressures throughout 1968 was a substantive strengthening of the legal position of major national minorities in the Republic. The extent of redress was directly related to the strength of the minority in question; the formal status of the Slovak nation was revised by federalising the Republic, the more important national minorities were given additional protection by a new law which expressly forbade "all forms of pressure aiming at denationalisation", whilst the large yet organisationally weakest Gypsy community was considered for national minority status but rejected as 'an uncrystallised ethnic group'.

The appropriate experts decided, after some deliberation, that Gypsies could not be regarded as on the same level as other national minorities (Práce : 9.10.68) and in this way the minority which had suffered the most direct and explicit assimilatory pressures was given no official acknowledgement of the fact, nor any legal safeguard that the previous policy would not be resumed.

Nevertheless there was considerable official disquiet about the anomalous Gypsy community which so closely resembled a national minority in many important respects. Eventually a peculiar compromise was adopted; in place of formal recognition as a national minority

Gypsies were granted the privileges of a national minority, but with no guarantee that these would continue. In November 1968-the same month in which the Government Committee was dissolved - permission was granted by the Ministry of the Interior for the formation of Gypsy associations in the Czech lands and in Slovakia, which were to be affiliated to the National Front. (147).

The new policy-line on Gypsies was not firm and clear, as had been the case in 1958; it was tentative and uncertain of its theoretical justification. In addition it was not comprehensive either, for although the decision to recognise the validity of Gypsy identity effectively negated the current policy of assimilation, little attempt was made to spell out the full implications to the various official bodies which administered Gypsy affairs, although in any case the mechanism for a co-ordinated approach ceased to exist as federalisation took effect. As a result contradictory policy-lines were sometimes pursued at the same time and in the same area. Whereas in the Czech lands efforts were made to reappraise the previous policy and even to integrate the Gypsy association into decision-making bodies, the Slovakian authorities remained aloof from the association of Slovakian Gypsies and persisted with a policy of assimilation - modified by little more than a few cosmetic changes such as the substitution of the term 'acculturation' wherever the term 'assimilation' would formerly have been used.

The key decision to permit the formation of Gypsy associations did not stem from any deep conviction on the part of central government that it had been fundamentally mistaken in the past\* but derived more

---

\* Undoubtedly a few experts who advised the government at this time did hold this view with passion.

from the general current of liberalisation and democratisation that had happened to co-incide with the collapse of the dispersal and transfer programme. Confronted with the evident breakdown of its timetable the government seemed at a loss and appeared to take the decision opportunistically in a mood of despondent resignation. Matters could hardly deteriorate and perhaps the direct involvement of Gypsies in some organised fashion might actually prove beneficial.

There was another, subsidiary reason why the associations were permitted - political expediency. At a time when popular feeling was violently anti-Soviet as a result of the August invasion, the government of 'normalisation' was in desperate need of public support. Among the drastic measures to re-establish control the National Front had been purged of all organisations containing 'anti-Soviet and anti-Socialist elements', that is of almost all the Front's previous members, and therefore new and ideologically uncontaminated recruits were urgently required. (Ulc<sup>4</sup>: 41). As entirely new organisations, the proposed Gypsy associations were especially suitable and - more importantly while opposition to the post-1968 regime was still strong - they were willing to proclaim their loyalty to the regime and their approval of Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakian affairs. Like the Slovaks - and with far more justification - their immediate concern was to consolidate their newly-won advantages, but in any case their pro-Soviet stance derived from a deeper source than opportunistic scheming; while the Red Army had liberated the other nationalities of Czechoslovakia from Nazi rule, it had saved the Gypsies from physical extermination.

It is evident that there was no real official commitment to the principle of Gypsy associations for the motives that lay behind



permission for their formation were largely negative. In some ways the short-lived rise of the associations was a sad repetition of the Gypsies' accustomed historical role as tools in the service of reactionary and unpopular rulers.

For a time the Gypsy associations' strategy paid off handsomely and they succeeded in gaining numerous short-term benefits, but once 'normalisation' had been achieved such marginal support became an irrelevance which could be discarded after a decent interval had elapsed. When the associations failed to match the high level of performance demanded of them, their inevitably erratic progress irritated the regime and even became a political embarrassment as other national minorities began to complain at the Gypsies' privileged treatment. Early in 1973 the Gypsy associations were simply ordered to disband for having 'failed to fulfil their integrative function'.\* The original bureaucratic decision went unrecorded and against it there was no possibility of appeal.

#### THE IMPACT OF FEDERALISATION

Federalisation of the Republic in late 1968 provided the opportunity to dismantle the already moribund administrative apparatus in charge of the Gypsy policy. It also proved a suitable moment to assess the extent of the failure of the Dispersal and Transfer programme which, in turn, led to a critical re-examination of the policy's basic aims. This was a period of general confusion for, apart from the numbing shock of the August invasion of Czechoslovakia

---

\* The associations "were guilty of not fulfilling their main tasks". (Kára : 386 note 31).

by the Warsaw Pact armies, there was no overall plan for the coordinated re-structuring of the administrative apparatus on a federated basis; instead, changes took place often out of phase and in piecemeal fashion resulting in anomalies that sometimes took years to resolve. In no area was this more true than in that of Gypsy affairs.

On November 7th 1968 Government Decree no. 384 finally dissolved the Government Committee for Questions of the Gypsy Population. The Committee had not met once during 1968 and the programme it should have been supervising was at an almost complete standstill. Local authorities hostile to the 1958 policy knew they had won and in the Czech lands "some NCs, acting against the Government Decree No.502/65 , began to dissolve their NC council committees for Gypsy affairs...when the Government Committee was dissolved". (140). Meanwhile in Slovakia the demise of the Committee only "hastened the drop in interest shown by leading DNC officials". (146).

Responsibility for Gypsy affairs passed to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs which set to work energetically and

assembled all available materials about the Gypsy population including comments on previous practice, which showed the unreality of some conclusions of Government Decree No.502/65. Before these conclusions could be more precisely formulated the state was federalised. (140).

It was hardly surprising that the Ministry was unable to finalise its findings for on December 22nd, barely six weeks after it had assumed responsibility, the Ministry's staff and files were divided as a consequence of Constitutional Law 171/1968, which established a federal ministry. Shortly afterwards, on January 8th 1969, a subordinate

Czech national ministry was established by Czech National Council Law 2/1969. Although Slovakia followed suit with its own ministry, it was decided that Gypsy affairs could be best handled by a continuation of the previous administrative structure, albeit limited to only half of the Republic. Accordingly a Slovakian Government Committee for Gypsy Affairs was established by SSR Government Decree No. 50/1969 on February 7th 1969. (137).

This asymmetric arrangement meant, in effect, that there was now no means of co-ordination between the Czech lands and Slovakia. While the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs had overall responsibility for the entire Republic, Gypsy affairs were not the concern of its subordinate national ministry in Slovakia but of a committee directly attached to the Slovakian government and thus outside and above federal ministry control.

Although the Czechs eventually adopted the Slovakian structure two years later, during the intervening period they made good use of the new freedom - a predictable consequence of federalisation - to place their own particular interests before the general well-being of the Republic. At least that was how it appeared to the Slovaks who watched in dismay as the Czechs progressively dismantled the previous policy : first returning overall responsibility from the Government Committee to a separate ministry - as had been the situation before 1965, then rejecting the fundamental policy aim of dispersal and finally, in November 1970, revoking the 1965 measures by the unilateral cancellation of Government Decree No.502/1965.

The Slovaks protested impotently at the dissolution of the Government Committee and at subsequent developments in the Czech



lands, seeing in them the legitimisation at national level of the previously near-illegal resistance of Czech NCs to the transfer programme and also an ominous statement of intent by the Czech lands that henceforth they refused to accept an equal share of a problem of whole-state dimensions.

[The dissolution of the Government Committee].... perhaps suits the Czech regions, where there are about 40,000 Gypsies. In Slovakia, where we have today 170,000 (and of these perhaps 100,000 living under quite inhuman conditions), the latest administrative structure for solving the gypsy question is utterly unsuitable. (146).

If the 1968 dissolution of the Government Committee had been opposed in Slovakia, at least its formal legality was undisputed for one Czechoslovak government decree had rescinded another. However, Czech Government Decree No. 279/70, cancelling the 1965 measures and the dispersal and transfer timetable, was another matter for here was a national government decree rescinding for its half of the Republic a decree issued by the government of the whole Republic without the agreement of its partner national government. It is true that in any case this timetable had lapsed at the end of 1970 but the legal anomaly remained. Only in August 1972 did the Slovakian government finally agree to rescind the 1965 measures, at last ending the bizarre situation where, for two years, nominal Slovakian policy had been to continue transferring Gypsies to the Czech lands even though the Czechs had cancelled their side of the bargain. Slovakian Government Decree No.94/1972 was soon followed by Czechoslovakian Government Decree No.231/1972 which replaced both Czech and Slovakian decrees and finally restored equilibrium. (Kára : 61).

In the meantime no attempt was made to remove Law 74 from the statute book. Unaltered since its appearance in 1958, this law remained in force throughout the Republic and with it the Nomads' Register. Although NCs had removed many Gypsies from the Register during the period from 1958 to 1965, the subsequent failure to update the law and its consequent inapplicability as a means of controlling natural migration had led to growing NC inactivity in this practice. In 1970 a Slovakian report noted:

Of the original total of more than 27,000 Gypsies [in 1959], 10,000 were gradually removed from the register according to their acculturation..... Today 17,000 Gypsies remain on the register of which more than half fulfil the conditions for removal from the register according to the criteria specified by law. (147).

The fact that Law 74 had fallen into disuse as a direct control did not mean that it was quite immaterial to Gypsies whether they were still included in the Nomads' Register; this was far from the case. On occasions, either from misguided conscientiousness or more commonly when it suited them, employers and local authorities still pointed to the incriminating stamp in the Gypsies' identity cards as a reason for refusing to employ them or register them as legal residents.

#### THE SITUATION OF THE GYPSIES AFTER A DECADE OF ASSIMILATIONISM.

In trying to assess the contribution of the assimilation campaign to the undoubted overall improvement in Gypsies' conditions that occurred between 1958 and 1970, it is essential to recognise that these are not the same thing. Official reports made no such

distinction however and from the inception of the 1958 policy they automatically claimed any advance as a success of the assimilation campaign - presumably on the assumption that since the policy was intended as comprehensive, absolutely every change that took place could be safely attributed to it.

There are good grounds for doubting this assumption for in spite of the government's determination not to rely simply on the impetus of the socialist revolution to take care of the Gypsy question, it is probable that in the long run this groundswell contributed more to the Gypsies' well-being than any of the grandiose plans specifically designed for that purpose. It can even be argued that on the whole the Gypsies would have been better off without the Gypsy policy because some major improvements in their situation such as their growing employment rate and increasing incomes were achieved more in spite of the policy than because of it. For all practical purposes the 1958 and 1965 measures did more to put barriers in the path of would-be Gypsy migrant workers by restricting their freedom of movement than they did to provide them with new, well-paid employment opportunities.

Probably there can be no final answer to these important questions; indeed it is hard enough to gauge with any accuracy the extent to which the situation of the Gypsies had improved during the decade of assimilationism.



Nevertheless statistical information about Gypsies increased in frequency, scale and accuracy during this period and in spite of unavoidable problems it is well worth making an attempt to sketch the situation of Gypsies in the late 1960s. To this end a number of statistic tables are given in Appendix 'A' at the end of this chapter.

When evaluating progress after 1958, the central authorities had relied to a great extent on the experience of Slovakia and in particular of the East Slovakia Region which surpassed all other regions in detailed and reliable reporting.

Following the collapse of the dispersal and transfer programme, however, new national statistics about Gypsies were available from the State Statistical Office's censuses of Gypsies in December 1967 and December 1968.

Eventually additional information was derived from the December 1970 national census but figures from this source must be treated with some caution since many Gypsies were evidently not included as such. Despite widespread evidence of a continued high birth-rate among Gypsies in the years 1969 and 1970, the national census gave a figure of 202,285 Gypsies in Czechoslovakia, 24,182 less than the 1968 figures of 226,467 (see Appendix 'A', Table 1). The 1966, 1967 and 1968 figures had shown a population increase among Gypsies of roughly 2,500 per year and projecting this to 1970 would give a total population of about 231,500, which meant that over 10% of Gypsies were not classified as Gypsies in the 1970 census. Since the 1966, 1967 and 1968 figures only represented those requiring

official attention (and classified into the three categories of 'cultural level', the real number of people who would have regarded themselves and would have normally been regarded by others as Gypsies was estimated in 1970 at between 250,000 and 300,000 by Dr. Srb, who had supervised the 1967 and 1968 censuses. (Srb : 193). Despite such difficulties, the 1967 and 1968 censuses of Gypsies contain what is probably the most extensive and reliable statistical information about Gypsies ever collected and published, not only in Czechoslovakia but throughout the world.\*

The most depressing figures were those compiled from NC reports showing the failure of the 'Dispersal and Transfer' policy from which so much had been expected. Yet other statistics were scarcely more comforting and, as was the case in the 1958-65 period, the experience of the local districts of Spišská Nová Ves and its Czech partners was evidently a reflection of national developments.

The Gypsy population continued to grow at a far faster rate than the national average, which often led to a direct worsening of other problems, especially in areas of high concentration. (See Appendix 'A', table 2). This population increase was due to the continuing high birth rate (see Appendix 'A', table 3). This increase was also reflected in an age structure where 50.7% of ČSSR's Gypsy population was under 16 years of age. (150: I/2).

The most immediate negative effects of the rapidly increasing population were apparent in accommodation statistics.

---

\* With the possible exception of Sweden where the numbers of Gypsies are minute in comparison.

Bearing in mind problems in operationally defining these terms, 80,029 Gypsies (ie. 35.7% of the total <sup>✓</sup>CSSR Gypsy population) lived in Gypsy 'settlements' in Slovakia, of which 64,096 lived in 'huts'. (1967 Census : Tables 30,32). Of the total of 31,361 Gypsy dwellings 12,232 (39%) were declared to be "hygienically and otherwise inadequate", although the inherent unreliability of such subjective evaluations was emphasised by the fact that more than half of the 'huts' were declared to be 'adequate'. (1967 Census : Tables 29, 33). If it were possible to give any clear meaning to these concepts, this would be a contradiction in terms.

Of greater objectivity and significance were figures showing the overcrowding in Gypsy dwellings. In the East Slovakia Region in 1964 there had been an average 1.15 households and 6.9 persons per dwelling (21), but in Slovakia as a whole these figures had risen by 1967 to 1.3 households and 7.5 persons per dwelling.\* Figures for Gypsies in the Czech lands were better but not greatly so (see Appendix 'A', Table 4). Incidentally, overcrowding in 'settlements' and 'huts' was the same as for Gypsies in Slovakia generally. (1967 Census : Tables 29, 30, 32).

This increase in overcrowding was a direct consequence of Gypsy population growth and administrative failure to provide sufficient additional accommodation in the 'dispersal and transfer' programme.

Comparable figures are not yet available from the 1970 census but statistics were published on the average size of Gypsy dwellings.

---

\* A 1970 Slovak report (147) gave this 1965 figure as 7.4 persons per dwelling for all Gypsies in Slovakia but this seems too high.



These showed that for Gypsies in the Czech lands 50.6% of their dwellings consisted of a kitchen plus one living room, or less, while for Slovakia the figure was 59.3%. These cramped quarters housed 43.1% and 55.4% respectively of the Gypsy population. (150 : Table V/1).

Although no wide-scale statistics had been available previously, the 1970 figures on basic amenities within dwellings suggested a considerable increase in these among Gypsies, especially in possession of TV sets and washing machines (in 56.7% and 43.9% respectively of Gypsy dwellings in Czechoslovakia). The difference between Gypsies and non-Gypsies still remained but appeared to be diminishing. (See Appendix 'A', Table 5 - which also showed the overall difference in amenities between the Czech lands and Slovakia).

Unfortunately no data on two of the most basic amenities - drinking water and toilets - was published, indeed the 1970 census form did not even list the possibilities of a household obtaining water from a village pump or completely without water. It seems probable that, as with accommodation, the Gypsy population in Slovakia grew faster than these amenities were provided (a total of 222 wells and 279 toilets between 1966 and 1970 - (147, 148)).

Employment statistics however continued to show a steady improvement, both for Gypsy men and women until by 1970 in the Czech lands 87.67% of men and 51.55% of women of productive age (15 to 59 years for men, 15 to 54 years for women) were employed. (See Appendix 'A', Table 6).

1970 was, in fact, a landmark for it was the first time any target of the 1958 measures had been achieved, although in a limited

way. For the employment level of Gypsy men, in the Czech lands at least, had at last reached the national average for men of productive age (86% in 1967. (Yearbook : 102)). Although the majority of these Gypsies were employed as unskilled labourers in industry and construction, these were well-paid jobs that laid solid economic foundations for further consolidation.

The figures for Gypsy women in the Czech lands still lagged behind the national average (74% in 1967 (Yearbook : 102)), as did those for Gypsy men and women in Slovakia (78.9% and 27.1% respectively (see Appendix 'A', table 6)), but there was regular progress.

The problem of unemployed adolescents still remained, although mainly in Slovakia where of unemployed fifteen year-old school-leavers 33.1% were Gypsies. (1967 Census : Table 18).

Also encouraging were health statistics. The rate of infant mortality among Gypsies in 1967 was 0.34% in the Czech lands and 0.55% in Slovakia (1967 Census : Table 23), a considerable improvement on the 1964 East Slovak Region rate of 0.71% for Gypsies (10), but still well above the 1967 national average of 0.23% (167).

The incidence of TB had diminished. In 1967 there were 0.58% of Gypsies with active TB in the Czech lands and 0.91% in Slovakia (1967 Census : Table 24) whereas the 1964 figure for Gypsies in Slovakia had been 2.4% (21). Also the percentage of child cases (under 15 years) among Gypsies with TB had dropped from 22% (for the E.Slovakia Region in 1964 (10)) to 13% (1967 Census : Table 24).

A general improvement in health was also reflected in the decrease in invalid pensions. In Slovakia 5.4% of all Gypsies had drawn invalid pensions in 1964 (which represented 11.2% of Gypsies

of productive age). (10). In 1967, however, the corresponding percentages had dropped to 2.8% and 5.7% respectively. (1967 Census : Table 26). Gypsies still received a higher proportion of social pensions than their share of the total population but this was explained by the fact that a relatively small proportion of Gypsies were eligible for old-age pensions, for these were tied to previous employment. (1967 Census : Table 26).

Education statistics are difficult to interpret. Nursery school attendance appeared to show a slight improvement. In 1964 only 1.4% of Gypsy children (0-15 years) had attended nursery school in the East Slovakia Region (21), but in 1967 this percentage was 1.9% for Gypsy children in Slovakia and 6.6% in the Czech lands (1967 Census : Table 11). The 1964 national average had been 9.7% (Facts : 128).

For BNS school attendance, figures were only available for Slovakia but the percentage of Gypsy children with bad school attendance (i.e. missed at least 30 hours of teaching or did not attend at all), rose from 36% for the school year 1965/1966 to 47.8% for 1969/1970. (150 : Table II/1). Performance, on the other hand, apparently improved. Although the overall percentage of Gypsy children that proceeded to the next grade remained between 55% and 60% (56.9% for the Czech lands and 59.8% for Slovakia (150 : Table II/4)), 63.3% of Gypsy school leavers had reached 6th grade or higher (150 : Table II/5).

The placing of school leavers still gave cause for concern, particularly in Slovakia where 40% of Gypsy school leavers remained



of productive age). (10). In 1967, however, the corresponding percentages had dropped to 2.3% and 5.7% respectively. (1967 Census : Table 26). Gypsies still received a higher proportion of social pensions than their share of the total population but this was explained by the fact that a relatively small proportion of Gypsies were eligible for old-age pensions, for these were tied to previous employment. (1967 Census : Table 26).

Education statistics are difficult to interpret. Nursery school attendance appeared to show a slight improvement. In 1964 only 1.4% of Gypsy children (0-15 years) had attended nursery school in the East Slovakia Region (21), but in 1967 this percentage was 1.9% for Gypsy children in Slovakia and 6.6% in the Czech lands (1967 Census : Table 11). The 1964 national average had been 9.7% (Facts : 128).

For BNS school attendance, figures were only available for Slovakia but the percentage of Gypsy children with bad school attendance (i.e. missed at least 30 hours of teaching or did not attend at all), rose from 36% for the school year 1965/1966 to 47.8% for 1969/1970. (150 : Table II/1). Performance, on the other hand, apparently improved. Although the overall percentage of Gypsy children that proceeded to the next grade remained between 55% and 60% (56.9% for the Czech lands and 59.8% for Slovakia (150 : Table II/4)), 63.3% of Gypsy school leavers had reached 6th grade or higher (150 : Table II/5).

The placing of school leavers still gave cause for concern, particularly in Slovakia where 40% of Gypsy school leavers remained

at home or were otherwise unplaced in 1969 and 41.1% in 1970. In the Czech lands the corresponding figures were 22% and 17.3% (see Appendix 'A', Table 7). After promising years in 1967 and 1968 the number of Gypsy adolescents in secondary education and apprenticeships dropped sharply in 1969, although the 1970 figures suggested a possible recovery. (See Appendix 'A', Table 8).

One important aspect of education not covered by the 1970 statistics was the high percentage of Gypsies in all residential institutions for children, especially in Slovakia. The 1967 Slovakia figures showed that of all children in infants' homes (0-1 year) 20.9% were Gypsies, in childrens' homes (1-3 years) 63.5%, in childrens' homes (3-15 years) 34.8% and in homes for young people (15-18 years) 38.7%.

In all, 2.5% of the Gypsy children (0-15 years) in Slovakia in 1967 were living in state institutions. (See Appendix 'A', table 9). In addition further capacity was required, for example the number of Gypsies in childrens' homes was only 54% of Gypsy children requiring a place. (1967 Census : Table 20).

Literacy statistics were given only for the 15-39 years age-group. The 1967 census stated that at the very least 13% of all adult Gypsies in Czechoslovakia were illiterate but that this percentage was certain to be much higher in reality. (1967 Census : Table 5). In 1970 a total of 63 literacy classes had been planned but only 5 realised. (148).

Other plans for educational courses for Slovakia in 1970 were more successful with 60 cooking classes, 36 sewing classes and 58 other classes being realised. Also 19 summer camps were held. (148).

Censuses gave no details of criminality, but a 1969 report by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs showed that Gypsies were four times more likely to be charged with an offence than the average citizen. (520 per 1000 as opposed to 73 per 1000). (140). Of the 3,897 Gypsies charged in 1967 57% were recidivists and 28% were in the 15-19 year-old age group. (140).

39% of all Gypsy offences were committed under the influence of alcohol and most frequent offences were fighting and bodily injury (29%) and thefts (27%). (140). No separate statistics were given on drunkenness but the proportion of Gypsy offences committed under the influence of alcohol was probably more indicative of widespread Gypsy alcoholism than anything else. A 1966 document reported that "Prague has 85 Gypsies attending its advisory centres for alcoholics which is roughly 10% of the adult gypsy population of Prague". (88).

#### DEVELOPMENTS AFTER 1968.

##### RE-EVALUATION IN THE CZECH LANDS.

##### Administrative Structure.

From the critical viewpoint of Slovakia, Czech re-evaluation of the administrative structure for dealing with Gypsy affairs consisted of three or four years of ponderous deliberation in order to arrive eventually at a position fundamentally the same as that from which it had started. The more cynical among the Slovak officials suspected that the real point of the exercise was to delay the re-introduction of a co-ordinated structure for the whole Republic until it was certain that there would be no revival of



population transfers of Gypsies from Slovakia to the Czech lands.

Whether this belief is justified, the Czech gyrations between 1968 and 1972 seemed a repetition of the sorts of argument that had preceded the 1965 measures.

The first step was to agree a division of labour whereby the federal ministry had responsibility for long-term planning, based on scientific research (the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences had at last recruited researchers in September 1968, (140)), while the national ministry was to concentrate "only on questions of social care...in the narrower sense". (140). In practice, the work of the two ministries overlapped considerably.

As well as reviewing the overall situation, the new Czech national ministry critically examined the current administrative system both at local and national level. Four alternative solutions were discussed, of which the only one to give NC committees for Gypsy affairs the power to act independently was rejected immediately.

- i) They cannot have the position of executive committees because they do not decide on the rights and duties either of citizens or of organisations. (140).

The three remaining possibilities were all for advisory status but differed in respect of the potential influence that would follow from attaching these advisory committees to bodies at different levels in the NC hierarchy.

- ii) As advisory bodies of the department of social welfare...their activities would be limited in practice to social problems in the narrower sense

- only and they could only participate in the solution of other problems by advice to other NC bodies.
- iii) As advisory bodies to NC councils [the post-1965 system] (therefore as advisory committees to elected NC bodies which direct the executive bodies) they could judge more effectively and more broadly all partial aspects, organise the activity of NC branches concerned and their policy advice could be put into practice quite flexibly by means of NC councils.
- iv) As NC committees (elected by plena composed mainly of elected deputies) they could engage even more effectively in overall care in the widest sense and control the fulfilment of key measures by the position and means specified [for such committees] in the law on NCs. (140).

Either of the two last alternatives were recommended but the ministry expected that "these preliminary remarks on organisation will lead to a closer evaluation of all alternatives". (140). It was suggested that such NC committees be established at LNCs, MNCs and SNCs with more than 200 Gypsy inhabitants, at DNCs with more than 500 and at all RNCs and cities.

The recommendations at national level followed similar reasoning, for the 1968 belief that the ministry could provide overall co-ordination was fallacious for the same reason that local committees for Gypsy affairs would be severely limited in their scope of activities if attached to social welfare departments. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs could no more direct its fellow ministries than could NC departments of social welfare direct their fellow departments.

Further disadvantages were that if ministry recommendations on local administrative structure were adopted, then the ministry would be unable to direct the operations of the resulting local committees for Gypsy affairs since they would be outside its jurisdiction. For

similar reasons the ministry would be unable to co-operate properly with the Gypsy associations for in their status as social organisations affiliated to the National Front, their proper administrative partners would be other members of the Front, e.g. Government.

Therefore the ministry recommended that a special committee be established as an advisory body of the Government (ie. the post-1965 Government Committee once more). This would also simplify co-operation with Slovakia, which had immediately adopted this system on the dissolution of the former Government Committee. (140).

On the 25th November 1970 the Czech Government Decree No.279/70 was issued, replacing previous Government Decrees No.502/65 (the 1965 measures) and No.159/67 (approving the dispersal and transfer timetable).

A Czech Government Committee was established as overall national co-ordinator, with a very similar composition to the previous 1965 Government Committee except that its members were from Czech not Czechoslovak bodies and included the president of the Czech Gypsy-Rom Association. (144).

At local level the recommendations of the ministry had been accepted and committees for Gypsy affairs were attached to NC councils (the third alternative above) although a year later their importance was increased by attaching them to NC plena (the fourth alternative above). However, a 1971 federal report complained that in some districts (chiefly in Slovakia) the most important officials in these committees, the secretaries, were not released from other NC responsibilities and were thus only part-timers. (150).



The problem of relating and co-ordinating the Czech and Slovak Government Committees was not resolved. In theory a third Committee attached to the federal government should have been established but in practice the only federal body to speak for the whole republic was the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. However, for the administrative reasons given above, this body was in no position to direct Government Committees.

### Policy Changes

If the re-examination of administrative structures in the Czech lands consisted of little more than retreading old paths - including the crucial avoidance of giving executive power to any level of special committee for Gypsy affairs - this was hardly true of policy re-evaluation. The permission granted for Gypsy associations to establish themselves already constituted a major policy reversal but this did not remain an exceptional and isolated fiat; it began an overall, if limited, change in direction.

In the Czech lands the first official change of policy after the dissolution of the Government Committee was Directive No.21/69, issued by the Czech Ministry of Education in August 1969. This was the result of a national conference of teachers the previous November (140) and although some of its recommendations were familiar (such as special classes for Gypsy children - previously urged in 1959 and 1963), others showed a different approach. For the first time Gypsy children were to have a special syllabus which emphasized the Czech or Slovak language and did not include Russian, usually compulsory in elementary schools. In general "methods, forms and organisation of education have to be adapted to the characteristics of Gypsy children". (137).

The first summary of the decade of assimilationism, the December 1969 report by the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (140), still found it helpful to retain the previous system of classifying Gypsies that dated from the original Central Committee Decree of 1958. However, the substitution of 'integration' for 'assimilation' indicated the changed times. (To compare with the 1965 version, see the 'Main Directions' document (85)).

In the first category (probably 2/5 of Gypsies...) are included those who are nearest to full integration into our society, in the second (also probably 2/5) are Gypsies who make partial efforts to extricate themselves from their backwardness and in the third (probably 1/5) are Gypsies living in the most wretched way which they are neither willing nor capable of changing. (140).

In this report the policy goal was stated to be "the gradual integration of Gypsies. To achieve this", the report continued, "it is indispensable to aim at progressively equalising the socio-economic and cultural conditions of their life". (140). This emphasis on the new goal of integration in place of assimilation marked all subsequent official Czech documents, although what this change actually meant - in terms of official action - was not entirely clear.

Of course socio-economic and cultural equalisation had been the fundamental aim of the 1958 policy too, but at that time this was believed to be attainable only by the total assimilation of the Gypsies by means of their maximum dispersal. Now, these formerly unquestionable tenets were relinquished as the ministry proposed "that NCs cease organising transfers of Gypsy families from Slovakia to the Czech lands and similarly that they abandon plans for organising extensive dispersal of Gypsy families from places where they are concentrated". (140). Instead they were to "gradually improve

living conditions in present Gypsy concentrations". (144). Equalisation was to be promoted:

...in places where [Gypsies]...are permanent residents in such a way that leads to their social integration.

In this a start [should be made] from the specific qualities and differences of this ethnic group from our people. To this end [NCs should] co-operate completely with the...Gypsy Association.

(144).

Although old-style dispersal on principle was to be discontinued, NCs were recommended to make exceptions for particularly suitable families. NCs were advised to:

help in moving to permanent residence in other places where conditions are better only those Gypsy families who, by themselves, express a real interest. In cases where the place of resettlement is outside the district, this move should be agreed with the appropriate NC. (144).

The actual procedure for such dispersal appeared more or less unchanged for it remained the NC's prerogative to decide whether the expressed interest was 'real' and in the case of inter-district moves the prior agreement of the receiving NC had to be obtained.

There still remained the perennial problem of natural migration but the Ministry promised to produce guide-lines for standardised procedures. It was already preparing:

with the co-operation of the Ministries of the Interior and Justice, of the Public Prosecutor and NCs,...principles for the effective application of legal regulations concerning accommodation, social affairs and residence registration to ensure a unified approach by NCs to Gypsy families who move to places where they have accommodation arranged. At the same time...[these principles should solve] the problem of [how to treat] Gypsy families without accommodation...which regularly change their place of residence. (144).



However these new procedures were unlikely to be more generous to Gypsies for only a year earlier the same ministry had approved the action of NCs in refusing to register incoming Gypsy migrants as residents (140), even though the Government Committee had acknowledged such action to be illegal. (94). (See Chapter Five : The Housing Shortage and its Effects).

In the 1958 policy, the aim of cultural equalisation was to be achieved by breaking up Gypsy concentrations in a dispersal programme, thus replacing the 'backward' influence of an 'undesirable Gypsy concentration' by the more 'progressive' surroundings of Czech or Slovak fellow-citizens. But since no more dispersals were to be made after 1968, there remained the problem of how to improve cultural conditions. The Ministry's answer was to call on social workers and the report envisaged the initial recruitment of 168 social workers (at a total annual salary of 3,685,000 crowns) who would be attached to social welfare departments of NCs.

However, before making a long-term plan, the Ministry acknowledged the need of a deeper analysis of theoretical and practical aspects, drawing on the experience of other states.

The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs report (137) in April 1970 was less specific in its proposals yet more outspoken, especially in its assessment of the 1965 measures. It even questioned the fundamental tenet that the type of politico-economic system should be the starting point of any explanation of inter-community relations, a startling departure from Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy in a report of ministerial level.

From the sociological viewpoint the problem of the Gypsy population appears to be that of the co-existence of a dominant society with an ethnically different minority group....It appears that as regards social position, the situation of minority groups is very similar in different countries despite differences of political and socio-economic systems in the dominant societies and despite differences in socio-cultural level in minority groups. The dominant societies define the relations between both groups in a way that usually no respect is paid to the specific interests of minority groups, often opinions not their own are forced on them and as a rule they are not consulted in decisions about their fate. (137).

The report also attacked the naive 'dispersal equals acculturation' formula, which had been presupposed by the 1958 and 1965 measures, in arguing that dispersal and transfers destroyed a social system without providing anything in its place.

As a result of the insensitive procedures of NCs in the choice of families for transfer, which was to be undertaken on a voluntary basis, Gypsies came to the Czech lands who were illiterate, on a low level, without basic hygiene customs or experience. Individual families were transferred that had hitherto lived in a clan society. The transfer destroyed this society and did not provide an alternative. The broken clan society and traditional way of life led to new migrations. (137).

For all its bold and radical departure from the earlier negative view of Gypsies, the Federal Ministry report still shared some of the fundamental misconceptions of the 1958 approach. In particular it saw Gypsy society as naturally static and traditional and consequently attributed the high migratory rates to "the historically-rooted proneness to nomadism in Gypsies" which had re-emerged on the disruption of clan society by the transfer system. (137). While the report sympathised with the loneliness of Gypsies separated from kinsfolk by transfers, such an approach made little allowance for the

crucial facts that these settlement Gypsies had not been nomadic for centuries and that the previous degree of immobility had been artificially high - being due less to a 'traditional way of life' than to external constraints. When these had been removed the result was a most un-Gypsy-like mass migration to industrial centres which, although bringing in its wake the usual hardships and sorrows of migrants, was nevertheless in an important sense a natural process. Compared with this self-initiated ferment, the disruption to Gypsy life caused by a few hundred transfers was minimal; the frustrations caused by restrictions on the Gypsies' freedom of movement was another matter.

The Federal Ministry, like the Czech Ministry, saw a solution to the problem of cultural equalisation in social workers and research, although there was an important difference of emphasis. Social work, as understood by the Czech ministry, seemed to be aimed simply at changing certain outward behaviour patterns so that they no longer offended non-Gypsies. In this conception of integration, as with assimilation previously, it was Gypsies who had to change in order to gain acceptance, while non-Gypsies were urged merely to refrain from discrimination.

Integration is, above all, the business of the Gypsy population itself, but others [i.e. non-Gypsies] should help this process by treating Gypsies as fellow-citizens with equal rights.

(150).

The analysis of the Federal Ministry was more subtle\* for it realised that such behaviour was the inevitable outcome of the

---

\* It was strongly influenced by one of the researchers of the Czechoslovakian Academy of Sciences.



Gypsies' disadvantaged position in wider society and often a direct expression of their alienation.

The main problems which increase differences between Gypsies and non-Gypsies can be seen as above all the shortcomings in education and qualifications, which lead to a limited choice of occupations, to low incomes, to social insecurity, to a loss of self-awareness and finally to a feeling of discrimination, whether this is the case or not. (137).

Rather than teaching Gypsies to behave, this Ministry saw social-work more as helping to develop new and viable types of social organisation among Gypsies in order to counter their growing discontent.

Social work with groups of Gypsies, which would be part of social work on the development of Gypsy...settlements, has never been tried in Czechoslovakia. (137).

The Federal Ministry also recognised that adjustment had to be mutual and not one-sided if any real progress was to be made towards integration; otherwise Gypsy alienation would continue to be regenerated.

Yet in a sense the disagreement over the role of social workers was academic for there appeared little likelihood of recruiting sufficient social workers. Discussion on this point at a 1970 seminar of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was depressingly similar to the minutes of a 1966 Government Committee meeting (90) where justified criticism was levelled at the disparity between ambitious plans and the limited resources actually available.

At the seminar delegates from the North Moravia region were particularly outspoken. The Ostrava representative pointed out that this plan for a great increase in social workers was proposed at the

very time when a national 10% cut in administrative staff was reducing the output of trained social workers. He added that in his area there would not be enough ordinary social workers recruited by the end of 1970 to fulfil the previous overall plan for 1969 - let alone extra social workers for Gypsies! (142).

Perhaps there was more than a grain of truth in the sceptical Slovaks' suspicion that for all the liberal redefinition of the Gypsy question in the Czech lands, the practical outcome was empty talk about social workers instead of the provision of real houses.

#### The Policy of Acculturation in Slovakia.

Whereas the major Czech reports re-iterated the positive results that had been achieved during the decade of assimilationism but then recommended what amounted to a reversal of previous policy, their Slovakian counterparts did the opposite; they stressed the enormous problems that still remained and continued to grow, whilst urging more vigorous implementation of the previous policy.

Although the transfer programme had been of little practical assistance to Slovakia, its removal as even a theoretical panacea in 1968 made Slovak realisation of their problems even starker. A November 1968 report expressed this mood.

Although no-one thought the gypsy problem would be solved in a generation, when the Government Decree No.502/65 was issued it was expected that during ten to fifteen years all gypsy settlements in the republic would be completely eliminated. As things stand at present however, there can be no expectations at all of eliminating existing settlements. On the contrary it is more to be expected that they will continue to grow. There

are about 400 new gypsy families annually but probably only 200 to 250 families can be moved from the settlements each year, as in [1968]... Nowadays it is clear that the elimination of gypsy settlements cannot be accomplished without accommodation. Only on the basis of allocating the necessary number of flats and houses from the normal quota for gypsy families will it be possible to continue satisfactorily with the elimination of huts. (146).

As the discussion about causes of the collapse of the dispersal and transfer programme has shown, Slovakian central authorities laid the blame entirely on people within the administrative structure rather than on mistaken policy aims or faults in the structure itself. Fundamentally the spirit of 1958 remained unchanged.

The main assessment of the period of assimilation (147) was given in the 1970 overall conception of a solution for the next decade (1971-1980). After a similar preamble to that in the 1958 Handbook for local authorities - that Gypsies lacked the necessary requirements of a nationality and therefore constituted only an ethnic group - the report went on to attribute much of the poor progress to date to the Gypsies themselves.

Gypsies achieved real equality of rights with other citizens...in 1945...[but] did not make use of the opportunity that was offered them. A large proportion continued to prefer their previous backward way of life. (147).

The same mood was evident in discussions of the problems of "Gypsy acculturation" and "eliminating the Gypsy way of life". (147).

Although Slovakia deferred to the 1968 developments to the extent of permitting the formation of a Gypsy association, substituting the term 'acculturation' for 'assimilation', writing



'Cigán' (Gypsy) with a capital 'C' and agreeing the need for social workers, there is little doubt that there was no real change of heart. The Gypsy association was seen in Slovakia more as a pressure group to enforce better behaviour than as a partner in finding a new approach, as in the Czech lands. Meanwhile the wholesale dispersal of Gypsies was still regarded as the only solution to the problem of Gypsy settlements.

As long as we do not swiftly resettle Gypsy families in proper flats and family houses amongst the other [non-Gypsy] inhabitants, we shall not solve the Gypsy problem but increase it even more. (147).

Yet, as a result of this basically unchanged approach, the Slovakian Government Committee began to press once more for the allocation of flats to Gypsies and to criticise inactive DNCs as soon as it had regained some measure of control after the muddle of federalisation.

That this sometimes had effect can be seen in the case of the Spišská Nová Ves DNC which, like many other Slovakian local authorities, had taken the opportunity provided by the weakened command system to lapse into virtual inaction. The DNC justified its evident reluctance to make use of the allocated budget in reports that were overtly racist in tone and which advocated new repressive measures in place of better housing and amenities. A February 1969 'Proposal for Solving the Gypsy Problem by Slovakian National Bodies' was particularly extreme.

Apart from the familiar demands for stricter penalties for convicted Gypsies and tightening up the regulations for registration of residence, there was a proposal "to rescind law 74/58 and replace

it by other legal regulations so that a record of Gypsy population movement could be maintained in order to prevent undesired movement and job changing by gypsies". (161).

Among the proposals for 'health' was one "to limit family allowances by legal means to a maximum of five children so that a large family cannot be misused intentionally to gain financial reward without work" and - even more drastic - another "to make compulsory sterilisation legally possible not only on health grounds but for social reasons, especially where there is no guarantee that children will receive an adequate upbringing". Decisions about compulsory sterilisation were to be made in court, "based on the recommendations of relevant social, education, health and other bodies". (161).

The section on education opened with the general remark that:

up till now decrees and directives of the state educational authorities have been one-sided because of a markedly excessive fear of racial discrimination. They do not take into account...the mental backwardness of the majority of these children which stems from the social backwardness of their environment.

(161).

The DNC proposed, therefore, to segregate Gypsy children in special boarding schools where they would not only receive a basic education but also learn "a suitable trade". The removal of children from their parents was to be enforced by law.

Since at present the placing of gypsy children in boarding school meets with great resistance on the part of their parents, this must be solved by relevant legal regulations which would support and in some cases ensure the success of these measures.

(161).

With proposals such as these, the DNC moved back to the spirit of the Austro-Hungarian monarch, Maria Theresa, when Gypsy children were forcibly dragged from their homes to be brought up by Christian families.

In fairness it should be said that no other DNC document was so extreme and that in any case the proposed measures would have needed authorisation on a national level - of which there was no chance whatsoever. Yet even though these proposals should be seen as indicative of DNC desperation at its inability to contain the district's growing Gypsy population rather than as realistic suggestions, it is still chilling to find "compulsory sterilisation... for social reasons" advocated at DNC level for this gives some idea of the local authority's general attitude to the Gypsies that it was their responsibility to help.

Not surprisingly statistics showed that during the half-year in which this report was produced (I-VII. 1969) less than 6 per cent was utilised of the annual budget for Gypsy affairs. (162). The situation was much the same the following year as regards investment in settlement amenity improvement, except that on this occasion the Slovakian Government Committee was already well established and reacted sharply to the news of Spišská Nová Ves' poor performance. In September 1970 a DNC report stated that for this type of investment\* during the first half-year:

---

\* By this time the situation had already improved considerably as regards investment in flat and nursery school construction for, during the first half-year of 1970, 2,266,000 crowns had already been used of the annual budget of 2,615,000 crowns (i.e. 87%). However no huts at all were purchased during this period. (166).



...of a total annual budget of 1,170,000 crowns only 119,000 crowns were used (i.e. 10.1%). Because of this critical state the DNC president was warned by a [Slovakian] government vice-president that our district does not pay sufficient attention to this socially important task and... effective correction of fulfilling the planned tasks was demanded. (166)

## The Rise and Fall of the Gypsy Associations

### The Formation of the Associations

In late 1968 the same Gypsy spokesmen who had been warned a decade earlier to abandon the idea of their own cultural organisations were at last granted permission to form Gypsy associations. As a consequence of federalisation there were to be two associations - one for the Czech lands and the other for Slovakia - both affiliated to the National Front umbrella organisation. This entitled them to political representation, to government funds and also to the right to engage in a certain amount of political activity - such as drumming up the Gypsy vote for elections to the National Assembly. The associations were to have the same organisational structure as every other Front member - a hierarchy of central, regional, district and local committees, each level being subordinate both to the level above it and also to the full congress of its members. (See Chapter Four).

Although the main function of the associations was to be in the field of socio-cultural activities, unlike the equivalent organisation of any other national minority in Czechoslovakia each Gypsy association had an economic branch which consisted of a nation-wide network of

co-operative production units, supplying gangs of contract workers to hard-pressed industrial enterprises. The purpose of this innovation was to enable the associations to become self-sufficient eventually. Once the economic branches had successfully established themselves a portion of their profits was to replace the support of National Front funds.

These associations grew swiftly in numbers, attracting not only poorer Gypsies but, as might have been expected from the pattern of other nationalist movements, the small but influential Gypsy intelligentsia which had been regarded officially as successfully assimilated. Within two years they were promoting festivals and competitions of Romani song and dance, publishing magazines - partly in the Romani language - as well as arranging social functions such as childrens' and pensioners' outings. They provided a great stimulus for young musicians and soon Gypsy pop groups began to appear on TV singing in Romani and some even reached the hit parade. Gypsies were increasingly described in the mass media as 'Rom' - their own name for themselves - and this usage began to spread among ordinary people.

Meanwhile the leadership broadened their contacts with Gypsy movements in other countries - within and outside the socialist bloc. The Gypsy-Rom Association of the Czech Lands sent delegations to the traditional Gypsy festival of Saintes Maries de la Mer in France and to the World Romani Congress in England,\* whilst its Slovakian counterpart organised a successful international festival of Gypsy song and dance in Bratislava.

---

\* I assisted the Czech Gypsy delegation to this congress in April 1971 as an interpreter.

It is not the intention here to chronicle the many activities of the Gypsy-Rom associations for this would need a detailed, separate study in itself, whereas the main focus of this thesis is national and local government during the decade of assimilationism. Nevertheless it is important to point out that the associations' apparent strength was largely illusory and their weaknesses contributed, in different measure, to their eventual downfall in 1973.

#### Weaknesses.

Although Gypsy spokesmen were delighted at their change in fortunes, they were also apprehensive about the precarious existence of the newly-formed associations. Undoubtedly the dubious legality of the associations had an inhibiting effect on every aspect of their activity - as probably was the intention. Awareness of this vulnerability helps to explain the extreme caution with which Gypsies criticised the questionable 1958 interpretation of Marxist-Leninist nationality theory in their case and the assimilatory practice that followed, and indeed their general strategy of ingratiation.

The Programme of the Czech 'Gypsy-Rom Association', distributed to delegates at the Association's First Congress in August 1969, clearly identified the real issue at stake in the debate over the legal status of the Gypsy minority:

If the Gypsies have not been recognised as a nationality yet, the main reason has been fear of the consequences of conceding various rights to the Gypsies as a nationality. Arguments - like the lack of certain characteristics (territory etc.) - .... were only used as an excuse for refusing to recognise Gypsies as a nationality. However this position conflicts with actual practice, where many of the measures used to solve the Gypsy problem have the



pronounced character of a nationality solution. Furthermore it does not agree with the fact that Gypsies have survived through centuries of oppression as an ethnic community.

(page 13).

But after having laid such promising foundations for an outright attack on previous policy, the Programme veered deliberately away from confrontation, continuing lamely:

The question is whether we should concern ourselves today with a matter of principle (to prove whether the Gypsies are, or are not, a nationality), or aim to solve the [Gypsy] question by putting our own programme into practice. At the present we are in favour of attempting a solution...

(ibid.)

The dilemma was a false one for the very possibility of Gypsies 'putting their...own programme into practice' ultimately depended on a guarantee of the continued existence of their associations as of right, as subsequent experience was to show. In effect this meant protection as a national minority but on this crucial issue the Programme once more began an oblique criticism of previous practice only to shrink back again and finally hesitated to commit itself:

As yet the characteristics of the Gypsies have not been theoretically elaborated. The question is very complicated. Nowadays, however, it is not possible to cling dogmatically to the precepts that were formerly valid. In order to resolve this question it will be necessary to investigate the teaching of Marxist-Leninist nationality theory. Indeed the concepts 'nation' and 'nationality' are unclear nowadays and explanations of their meaning are not always consistent.

(pages 12, 13).

In the following year the Praesidium of the same association accompanied a similar discussion with the disclaimer: "Most decidedly we do not want our memorandum to be understood as a political demand".

(Mem.)

As well as the associations' fatal weakness vis-à-vis government, they also suffered from lack of support from their own minority population. This was to be expected for severe restrictions on political activity had prevented Gypsy leaders from trying to build a mass movement in support of their demands and consequently permission for the formation of the associations had not been a concession won by organised struggle but rather a dispensation granted to what amounted to a tiny pressure-group.

The formal co-option of the associations into the establishment greatly restricted their range of options without giving them any real measure of power in return. Although association officers were regularly invited to participate in meetings at ministerial level, the responsibility to make vital day-to-day decisions about housing and jobs still rested with local authorities and employers who were able to disregard local branches of the associations with impunity. Meanwhile, since the associations owed their position and their funds entirely to government largesse, they forfeited the possibility of adopting the tactics of a western-style protest movement - denouncing institutionalised discrimination and pressing for structural change. Instead they had to remain mute or, at most, confine themselves to generalised complaints when local and national authorities criticised their lack of success in solving social problems that were, by their nature, beyond the powers of the associations to remedy.

The associations were further handicapped by the fact that some of their leading officers - vetted and approved by the Communist Party - were inevitably Party members or bureaucrats of long-standing, well schooled in the politics of pious resolutions and vacuous

generalisations. All too rarely were they the principled activists that were needed to combat the structural disadvantages of the difficult role in which the associations had been cast.

All of these limitations caused predictable problems for the associations in the task of recruiting a mass membership. City and settlement Gypsies alike were quick to detect the disparity between the trappings of power of association officers and their evident inability to provide practical assistance where it was needed and often believed that the main purpose of those accepting office was to enrich themselves with the government funds destined for their poorer fellow- Gypsies. However such suspicions would probably have arisen even had the Gypsies not been a community where in the past inescapable external pressures had resulted in dissension and feud rather than solidarity. For this mistrust was not unique to Gypsies; it was shared by ordinary Czechs and Slovaks who believed that Party officials found it easier to obtain cars, weekend cottages, trips abroad and precious vouchers for the hard-currency shops that stocked luxuries imported from the West.

Regrettably, doubts about corruption in the associations were not without foundation. At regional and district offices, where cadres were often poorly trained or semi-literate and book-keeping techniques primitive, the presence of large cash sums proved too great a temptation for some officers to resist and several were convicted of embezzlement and imprisoned.

The most troubling case was that of 'Nevodrom' the economic branch of the Czech Gypsy association. By 1972, when the time was fast approaching for the organisation to assume full responsibility



for the economic requirements of its parent Gypsy association, Nevodrom's finances were in such confusion that a number of regional units had to be suspended and eventually the association decided to cease its economic operations entirely.\*

Nevertheless the associations steadily increased their membership and the scale of their activities in spite of the disadvantages of their position and economic setbacks such as the failure of Nevodrom. From the start they had been acutely sensitive about their unrepresentative nature and consequently loth to publish figures of branch and individual membership but figures published in 1973 showed that the association for the Czech lands had almost doubled its members between 1970 and 1972. The figure of 8,500 given for 1972 (Románo Čil 3/72) meant that over a third of the Gypsies over the age of fifteen in the Czech lands were members of the association and probably that a still greater proportion of Gypsy families had at least one member.

This represented a significant broadening of the associations' base which not only strengthened their position vis-à-vis government but offered eventual hope of new and more militant leaders. The promise remained unfulfilled for early in 1973 the associations were disbanded.

---

\* In fact the co-op production units operated by the Gypsy associations were a complete anomaly by this time for at the end of 1971 all other co-op production units in the Republic had been disbanded compulsorily, accused of capitalistic business practices and exploitation of their labour force. Such charges were probably justified as the testimony of Gypsy employees of such non-association co-ops indicates. (See following chapter).

It is important to recognise, however, that the undoubted shortcomings of the associations' co-ops were not unique but shared to a large degree by many other non-Gypsy co-ops in the Republic.

The End of the Gypsy Association in the Czech Lands.

The Gypsy-Rom Association for the Czech Lands was bundled unceremoniously out of existence following a plenum of the association's central committee in Prague on April 25th 1973. The Praesidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party had previously decided to expel the Gypsy associations from the National Front and since this amounted to a death sentence, it only remained to carry out the execution in as convenient a manner possible to minimise unwelcome publicity. The device chosen was for the associations to disband voluntarily and accordingly the plenum of the Czech association was summoned to inform members of the decision that had been taken about their fate. In fact this way of ending the activities of the association was quite unconstitutional but, as discussion at the April plenum was to show, the Party had little concern for the legal niceties of the case.

We owe this remarkable picture of bureaucratic dirigisme in action to the courageous publication of the minutes of the plenum\* in the last issue of the association's newsletter. (Románo L'il 2/1973).

The plenum opened with a lengthy speech by a vice-chairman of the Central Committee of the National Front who argued that although the association had not compromised itself politically during the troubled year of 1969 and had done some useful work in its early stages

---

\* A tape-recording of the proceedings, made by a representative of the National Front, was not available to the association. The minutes, therefore, were based on full notes taken during the course of the plenum.

- as during the sensitive elections of 1971, it was now failing in many ways. In particular he cast doubts on the impressive increase in membership by pointing to unpaid subscriptions, recalled the closure of Nevodrom the year before and criticised the lack of association branches at local level in some areas. The whole strategy of the vice-chairman's argument was to demonstrate that the association had effectively ceased to function for the association's statutes specified "inactivity of the organisation" as one of the two circumstances in which the association would be terminated. The other was if two-thirds of the delegates to the association's congress, its highest body, should vote for termination. (Article VI. § 1).

The vice-chairman concluded by informing his audience that following the Party decision to expel the association because it "lacked cadres", the Central Committee of the National Front was asking both associations to dissolve themselves.

The association officer who chaired the meeting had been well prepared for his role in advance - and perhaps others too - but to almost all of the plenum members the news came as a bombshell. After the initial shock a number of delegates countered the vice-chairman's allegation of inactivity with concrete instances of recruiting drives, fund-raising and voluntary work but their protests had the tone of despairing resignation to the 'fait accompli'. As had been the case of the leaders of political reform in 1968, many delegates were disarmed by their deeply-instilled loyalty to the Communist Party; when put to the test they would always accept the Party's decision as final.



Not all were so compliant and voices were raised questioning the legality of the procedure. One pointed out that the proposal was not on the agenda, which had to be circulated to plenum members fourteen days in advance. Others drew attention to the much more serious irregularity that by the statutes only the congress was empowered to dissolve the association; even if the plenum wanted to take the recommended course of action, it had not the legal right to do so.

There was opposition to the proposal that the association should voluntarily put its head into the noose, but a Communist Party official from the Central Committee's section for social organisations put the position bluntly.

Why disband voluntarily? We could have used an official directive but we chose the most convenient way. If you do not do it, we will take care of it!

"Perhaps things will be different in ten years time," he added cynically,

"that is, if your intellect has improved in the meantime".

The plenum delegates knew the situation was hopeless but some spoke out nevertheless. Their objections were brave and moving gestures, but futile. Demoralised by its long drawn-out difficulties and weakened by internal dissension and divided loyalties, the association did not have the capacity to make a defiant stand against the inevitable. The association's president delivered a sad final speech - not from his presidential chair but from the body of the hall. In a stunned voice he thanked the delegates for their efforts

on behalf of the Rom movement and proclaimed his unshaken belief in further progress and in socialism. The experiment of the associations was over and only a few mechanical formalities were left to complete.

The association official in the chair drew the discussion to a close with a bland recommendation:

In my opinion we Gypsies would be even better off if we were without this burden of a Gypsy-Rom association. In my opinion we should agree with the recommendation - and now I shall hand over to the comrade from the National Front for the concluding speech.

The vice-chairman was brief and to the point in his exposition of the technical possibilities open to the plenum members.

According to the statutes of your organisation it can be dissolved either by a two-thirds majority of the congress delegates or else through inactivity of the organisation. But who would organise a congress? We see the second way as better - besides, there was no activity....The Gypsy-Rom Association in Slovakia has already agreed to this procedure and so I recommend that we elect members of a liquidation committee.

Members were proposed and spasmodic voting took place but the officer in the chair did not even bother to count the votes. The same thing happened with voting for termination of the association a few moments later. There were perhaps six or eight votes in favour of the recommendation, five against and four abstentions.

When the voting had finally sealed the fate of the association one plenum member could contain his indignation no longer.

From the very start of the association I have served as a district chairman. Our branch was looking forward to this coming May Day and we prepared floats for the procession and promised to complete 3,000 hours as voluntary brigade workers to raise funds. We wanted to improve the lot of Roms.

Our association is accused of neglecting its tasks and misusing funds but I wonder how those comrades in local authorities made use of the funds at their disposal for solving the Gypsy question. When Government Decree No.502 was in force we were divided into categories but it was those comrades who categorised us that misused funds. I have six children yet I go among Gypsies and work unpaid. Did those comrades do the same?!

All of us have gone through tenements but when shall we sit in the pub at last?

Another member, almost in tears, could only bring himself to ask, rhetorically:

But what are we to tell our Roms now? Why did the association disband?

Anger and pathos alike left the professional bureaucrats unruffled and the Party official coolly thanked those present on behalf of the Party's Central Committee for their "success in achieving equality". Likewise the final words of the officer in the chair were an affront - cynically disregarding the enormity of what had been done.

Let us conclude then with this slogan of the president of our association - 'Unite and work on!'



THE ASSESSMENT OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT BY THE CZECHOSLOVAKACADEMY OF SCIENCES.

Early in 1975, two years after the Gypsy association had been dissolved, the research team of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences published its report entitled: 'On the Social Problem-Area of Gypsies in Czechoslovakia'. (Kára et al.). As the introduction correctly claimed, this study was "the first relatively definitive sociological treatment of the Gypsy question" containing "the most recent sociological, ethno-sociological and demographic findings concerning this important social problem" and was "a theoretical foundation for a further stage of research". (ibid :3,4).

When the research was originally commissioned the intention was that it should also serve as a guide to government policy-making by including policy recommendations for future practice but for various reasons the research gradually assumed a more abstracted academic character as it progressed. The vast bulk of the report eventually concerned itself with the changing life-style of Gypsies in Czechoslovakia, but it was impossible to write such a study in depth without at least a brief evaluation of the 1958 assimilation campaign and a prognosis of future development. Since the theme of this thesis is government policy itself and its effects, only these short sections of the report are directly relevant here, although other material from the report has been incorporated in previous chapters. However, before going further, it is best to pause briefly to recall the changes in political climate during the production of the report.

The small research team included several leading Czech Gypsiologists who were initially influential as ministry advisors and who recommended the establishment of Gypsy associations and subsequently played an active part as members of the association in the Czech lands. Since 1968 the Institute - like all other higher education institutions - had been purged drastically in retribution for the leading role of academics and intellectuals during the liberalisation process, 'normalisation' had been completed and the short-lived experiment of the Gypsy associations had been abruptly terminated. It could be expected, therefore, that these events might have had a certain restraining influence on the formulation of the report and indeed this sombre backcloth helps to explain the heavy emphasis on 'ethno-sociological' material, the circumspect tone of the report and its muted criticisms, slipped in between the lines as dark afterthoughts to confident proclamations about a bright and assured future development.

The report opened with a customary obeisance in the direction of Marxist-Leninist nationality theory, reasserting the 1958 position that "Gypsies in Czechoslovakia are neither a nation nor a nationality but form a special ethnic group". (ibid : 4). However, this claim was not supported, as formerly, by the familiar argument that the Gypsies lacked at least one of the formal characteristics of a nationality but defended on the more general grounds that to group Gypsies with other nationalities in Czechoslovakia:

would reflect neither their current level of socio-economic development nor their prospects of future development in the concrete historical conditions of Czechoslovakian socialist society.

(ibid : 14, 15).

While reminiscent of the 1959 government manual (5), this argument had a double meaning for although apparently a neutral and objective prediction about the probable natural development of this community, the phrase "concrete historical conditions" could be interpreted as referring to the government's continuing view of Gypsies as a backward, tribal form of society which it had no intention of encouraging to consolidate into a nationality. Yet, having stated its orthodox position on the nationality question, the report then qualified this by a tentative acknowledgement, that the previous approach had been too extreme in its uncompromising opposition to all manifestations of Gypsy ethnicity.

Research on the Gypsy question . . . leads to the conclusion that perhaps the previous approach to the problem . . . should have paid more attention to the Gypsies' specific ethnicity.

(ibid : 14).

In its assessment of the 1958 policy the report was at pains to avoid outright criticism whilst at the same time cautiously indicating some of the drawbacks of total assimilationism. The report sought to present the twists and turns of the Gypsy policy since 1958 as a relatively smooth progression in which new measures represented minor pragmatic modifications to a fundamentally sound initial analysis. This it attempted by means of identifying three main aims of the 1958 campaign:

- the elimination of nomadism
- maximum dispersal
- complete assimilation

and arguing that the first two had been retained as policy aims throughout (ibid : 55), whilst only the third had been dropped



eventually after criticism that in practice it had been misinterpreted because of excessive yet comprehensible zeal to achieve quick results. The implication was that the policy-makers' real aim from the start had been 'integration' but that they had failed to make their intentions plain.

From 1958 the solution of the so-called 'Gypsy question' was based on the principle that no change in the position and way of life of the Gypsies would be possible:

- a) without abolishing the so-called 'nomadic way of life' (for this reason this way of life was eliminated on the basis of Law 74/1958 and the register of these people in February 1959).
- b) in densely-settled population concentrations of large numbers of Gypsy families. (From this principle was derived the conclusion that they must be dispersed as evenly as possible among [non-Gypsies]. . . because, in the way that the 'Gypsy question' was understood at that time, all the more conspicuous manifestations of Gypsy ethnicity were considered as a brake to their adaptation from a backward way of life and as a barrier to their inclusion in society . . .
- c) [without] assimilation (gradual, but total), which was emphasised both as a means and as an end. (However, the manner in which the concept 'assimilation' should have been understood was not elucidated sufficiently in a single important document of the period. In practice, it was interpreted to mean that the necessary suppression of all their ethnic characteristics was urgently required in order to overcome the Gypsies' historico-social backwardness. In consequence every specific expression of a distinct way of life was regarded as undesirable and retarding).

(Kára : 55, 59).

These aims were indeed pivotal but this manner of formulating them tended to minimise, deliberately, the logical interconnection of

the separate elements in the interests of demonstrating an overall continuity of approach since the beginning of the assimilation campaign. This attempt to conceal the important policy reversal in 1968 must be rejected for whilst it is true that the fundamental goal of Gypsy policy remained, throughout, the socio-economic equalisation of Gypsies with other Czechoslovakian citizens, this concept does not serve to unify all policy lines from 1958 onwards for it is fundamentally ambiguous and in reality was interpreted quite differently at different times. Perhaps the best way to make this clear is to separate 'Gypsy policy' into three distinct logical parts: (see page 396)

I. 1958 total assimilation of all Gypsies was seen as the only means\* of achieving socio-economic equalisation and it was claimed that this course of action stemmed from an analysis of Marxist-Leninist nationality theory. Assimilation was not an additional and quite separate aim, tacked onto the 1958 policy as an after-thought and still less was it an extreme practice adopted by certain local administrators because key official documents had somehow neglected to explain its precise significance. There was no need to explain it; the Czechs and Slovaks were quite clear about its meaning from their own bitter historical experience. But in any case local administrative resistance thwarted any systematic implementation of assimilation and so it existed effectively only at the theoretical and policy levels and least of all at the level of practical application where the Academy report tried to locate it almost exclusively.

---

\* Here assimilation is not part of the meaning of equalisation but whether policy makers made this distinction is uncertain; this formulation gives them the benefit of the doubt.

|                |   |  |   |  |
|----------------|---|--|---|--|
| National Level | 1. Theoretical Justification                                    | 1958   | 1968  |  |
|                | 2. Policy Implications  | <p>Appeal to M-L nationality theory that Gypsies are neither a nation nor a national minority and should therefore be assimilated.</p> <p>Total assimilation - in dwelling<br/>(by dispersaal)<br/>           - at work<br/>           - in political organisation<br/>           - in law<br/>           - in culture</p> | <p>? ? ?</p> <p>Recognition of Gypsies as a distinct community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- establishment of socio-cultural associations.</li> <li>- termination of mandatory dispersal</li> <li>- adoption of term 'Rom' in place of 'citizen of gypsy origin'.</li> </ul> |  |
|                | 3. Local Administration (i.e. practical application of policy). | <p>On the whole opposed to assimilation policy and relatively successful in blocking large-scale dispersal and later transfers.</p>  | <p>Basically unchanged. End of requirement to disperse Gypsies. Continuing discrimination unhampered by Gypsy associations since these had no legal powers.</p>   |  |



The permission given to Gypsies to form their own socio-cultural associations in 1968 represented not a modification but a reversal of the previous assimilation policy. However the volte-face was not complete, nor was it undertaken with any conviction, as was evident from the failure to guarantee the continued existence of the associations and to revoke previous legislation and government decrees. Fundamentally it was an opportunist move by a bewildered government and both policy makers and Gypsy associations alike shrank from probing the theoretical basis of the policy changes for this would have swiftly led to a rejection of the 1958 interpretation of Marxist-Leninist nationality theory in favour of the alternative, pluralist version where minority communities such as the Gypsies were to be encouraged to flourish in their own right. (See Appendix One). Meanwhile at the level of practical application there was little real change as councils continued to contain their local 'Gypsy problem' as best they could be resisting the registration of newcomers.

The charge made by the Academy report that "the concept 'assimilation'. . . was not elucidated sufficiently [in 1958]" is far more appropriately levelled at the terminology of the post-1968 policy-makers for the new goals of 'acculturation' (adopted in 1969 in Slovakia) and 'social integration' (adopted in 1970 in the Czech lands) were left more or less undefined and consequently permitted great flexibility of interpretation. At first - at least in the Czech lands - the new stance appeared a radical departure from the discredited assimilation policy but later, when official disenchantment with the Gypsy associations led to their enforced dissolution, the government was able to revert to a pre-1968-type position without any need to redefine policy objectives.

Therefore, rather than resembling a smooth and orderly progression, official policy towards Gypsies in Czechoslovakia swung violently and uncertainly from one extreme almost to the other in 1968 and was soon to veer back once more in the opposite direction. It comes as no surprise to realise that these dramatic policy reversals reflected wider political developments in the Republic during these troubled years.

To the Gypsies themselves the gradually stiffening resistance towards them on the part of local authorities which they experienced from the late 1950s onwards was of more direct importance than variations in official policy. Nevertheless they were far from immune from the repercussions of official policy and although the 1958 campaign was motivated by genuine concern for what were regarded as their best interests, selective use of restrictive measures against them by local councils and in particular the chauvinistic denigration of their whole Gypsy identity as worthless, accompanied by constant exhortation to renounce their shameful origins, had a devastating effect on their already shaky self-esteem. The Academy report candidly acknowledged the damage they suffered:

As the result of such a concept of assimilation and its incorrect application many Gypsies developed psychic syndromes; meanwhile incorrect prejudices and opinions about the Gypsy problem were strengthened amongst [non-Gypsies]. . .

It cannot be ignored that some of the problems [of Gypsies themselves] are consequences of the previous solution. . . which undervalued social and ethnic aspects.

(ibid : 59, 61)

The Gypsy associations had done something to redress the balance by giving Gypsies the chance to be proud of their identity for the first time but in the event this had been only a brief interlude.

In spite of the admitted defects of the assimilation policy, the public voice of the report was still able to echo the bold claim put forward in the 1959 manual(5) that Czechoslovakia's solution of its Gypsy question provided a model for the world. However, no attempt was made to distinguish the undoubted improvements in Gypsy living standards and social integration that stemmed from the general socialist infrastructure (and in particular from the extensively expanding economy that gave Gypsies their opportunity to earn high wages) from the more dubious benefits directly attributable to the Gypsy policy itself. Indeed, like the government reports before it, the Academy report seemed unaware that there was a difference.

In its critical evaluation of the results achieved and objective assessment of the degree of social integration of Gypsies. . . as well as in its theoretical/scientific approach, Czechoslovakia stands in the forefront. Its manner of solution has no equivalent among Western European countries and even to socialist societies it is a source of inspiration.

The approach to the Gypsy problem and . . . experience in its solution take on a wider significance. . . and can serve to heighten the prestige of socialism in the world.

(ibid : 62).

Given the current political climate perhaps such a pronouncement was inevitable but a few pages later the report lapsed into unprecedented pessimism about the future. Contrary to 1958 assumption of a relatively



speedy solution to the question, there was the warning that:

The social integration of Gypsies is a long-term affair, a lengthy social process, which commenced with the establishment of a socialist social order and which will last, in all probability, throughout the entire period of socialist development.

(ibid : 66)

Not even a successful outcome was assured for the report pointed out that if sufficient respect was not paid to the specific ethnicity of Gypsies, the result would be to alienate them still further.

A delicate approach to ethnic particularities is required - in the spirit of Leninist principles - . . . for lack of sensitivity. . . and disregard for ethnicity does not help the Gypsies' social integration but provokes the opposite reaction. This takes the form of separation and isolation from the remainder of society and in this way leads not to the eradication of their backwardness but to its perpetuation.

(ibid : 66, 67).

This argument was straight from the pluralist version of Marxist-Leninist nationality theory\* and although the report was unable to say as much, perhaps it envisaged a day when the improving living and educational standards of Gypsies might be expected, on past experience of other emergent ethnic communities, to lead to heightened self-awareness and even a revival of nationalism - a path of potential development the government was determined to block.

---

\*

See Stalin's third dialectic (Appendix One).

APPENDIX 'A' - SOME TABLES OF POST-1967 STATISTICS.List of Tables.

|  | <u>Source</u><br>(Doc.no/Table no.) |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Table No.1. Increase of Gypsy population (1921-1970)<br>in Czechoslovakia.   | (150:I/1)                           |
| 2. Gypsy population by individual regions<br>(1967, 1968).   | (150:I/4)                           |
| 3. Natural reproduction of Gypsy population<br>in comparison with total population in<br>Czechoslovakia (1967,1968). | (150:I/3)                           |
| 4. Accommodation of Gypsy families (1967)  | (1967 Census:<br>29)                |
| 5. Amenities of permanently occupied<br>dwellings of the Gypsy population(1.12.1970)                                 | (150:V/5)                           |
| 6. Economic activity of the Gypsy population<br>(1967-1970)  | (150:III/1,2,3)                     |
| 7. Placing Gypsy adolescents (1969,1970)   | (150:IV/1)                          |
| 8. Gypsy adolescents in middle and high<br>schools (including apprentices)(1967-1970)                                | (150:II/7)                          |
| 9. Gypsy children resident in state institutions<br>(1967).  | (1967 Census:<br>10,17,19).         |

TABLE 1.

Increase of Gypsy Population (1921-70) in Czechoslovakia

(150 : Table I/1)

| Territory      | Gypsy population |        |         |         |         |         |         |
|----------------|------------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                | 1921 *           | 1930 * | 1947    | 1966    | 1967    | 1968    | 1970**  |
| Czech lands    | 61               | 227    | 16,752  | 52,519  | 59,467  | 61,085  | 50,542  |
| Slovakia       | 7,967            | 31,188 | 84,438  | 161,006 | 164,526 | 165,382 | 151,743 |
| Czechoslovakia | 8,028            | 31,415 | 101,190 | 221,525 | 223,993 | 226,467 | 202,285 |

\* By no means real state, but according to declarations of Gypsy nationality.

\*\* From 1970 national census in which many Gypsies were evidently not classified as such.

TABLE 2. Gypsy Population by Individual Regions (1967, 1968).

(150 : Table I/4).

| Region                 | Absolute Gypsy pop. |         | % of total pop. |      |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------|-----------------|------|
|                        | 1967                | 1968    | 1967            | 1968 |
| Prague                 | 3,170               | 3,471   | 0.26            | 0.3  |
| Central Bohemia Region | 5,925               | 3,690   | 0.41            | 0.5  |
| South " "              | 2,581               | 2,613   | 0.39            | 0.4  |
| West " "               | 8,647               | 9,014   | 1.01            | 1.0  |
| North " "              | 18,922              | 18,907  | 1.69            | 1.7  |
| East " "               | 5,279               | 5,295   | 0.44            | 0.4  |
| South Moravia " "      | 4,155               | 4,504   | 0.21            | 0.2  |
| North " "              | 10,788              | 11,591  | 0.61            | 0.6  |
| Bratislava             | 1,027               | 1,032   | 0.36            | 0.4  |
| West Slovakia Region   | 40,478              | 40,329  | 2.22            | 2.5  |
| Central " "            | 33,331              | 35,078  | 2.41            | 2.5  |
| East " "               | 89,697              | 88,943  | 7.38            | 7.2  |
| Czech lands (total)    | 59,467              | 61,085  | 0.57            | 0.6  |
| Slovakia (total)       | 164,526             | 165,382 | 3.72            | 3.7  |
| Czechoslovakia (total) | 223,993             | 226,467 | 1.55            | 1.6  |



TABLE 3. Natural Reproduction of Gypsy Population in comparison with total population of Czechoslovakia (1967,1968).

(150 : Table I/3).

| Territory      | Gypsy pop.(per 1000 inhabs.) |      | Total pop.(per 1000 inhabs.) |      |
|----------------|------------------------------|------|------------------------------|------|
|                | 1967                         | 1968 | 1967                         | 1968 |
| Czech lands    | 29.7                         | 26.2 | 2.9                          | 2.3  |
| Slovakia       | 28.2                         | 26.2 | 9.4                          | 8.5  |
| Czechoslovakia | 28.6                         | 26.2 | 5                            | 4.2  |

TABLE 4. Accommodation of Gypsy Families (1967)

(1967 Census : Table 29).

| Territory      | Number of Gypsy |          |         | Per Gypsy dwelling occurs |         |
|----------------|-----------------|----------|---------|---------------------------|---------|
|                | Dwellings       | Families | Inhabs. | Families                  | Inhabs. |
| Czech lands    | 9,493           | 10,805   | 59,467  | 1.1                       | 6.3     |
| Slovakia       | 21,868          | 27,961   | 164,526 | 1.3                       | 7.5     |
| Czechoslovakia | 31,361          | 38,766   | 223,993 | 1.2                       | 7.1     |

TABLE 5. Amenities of Permanently Occupied Dwellings of Gypsy  
Population (1.12.70) \*

(150 : Table V/5).

| Amenities                      | Czech lands                   |                 |      | Slovakia                      |                 |      | Czechoslovakia                |                           |      |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|------|-------------------------------|-----------------|------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|------|
|                                | Dwellings<br>of all pop.<br>% | Gypsy dwellings |      | Dwellings<br>of all pop.<br>% | Gypsy dwellings |      | Dwellings<br>of all pop.<br>% | Gypsy dwellings<br>absol. |      |
|                                |                               | absol.          | %    |                               | absol           | %    |                               |                           |      |
| Bathroom (shower corner)       | 60.6                          | 2,215           | 27.6 | 40.8                          | 2,313           | 10.4 | 57.2                          | 4,528                     | 14.9 |
| Flush W.C.                     | -                             | 3,528           | 44.0 | -                             | 2,004           | 8.9  | -                             | 5,532                     | 18.2 |
| Running water                  | 83.0                          | 6,155           | 76.7 | 59.8                          | 4,766           | 21.3 | 76.7                          | 10,921                    | 35.9 |
| Electricity                    | 98.9                          | 7,683           | 95.7 | 97.9                          | 19,198          | 86.0 | 98.6                          | 26,881                    | 88.5 |
| Washing machine                | 68.0                          | 3,990           | 49.7 | 72.7                          | 9,341           | 42.0 | 69.3                          | 13,331                    | 43.9 |
| T.V.                           | 75.3                          | 5,596           | 69.7 | 67.6                          | 11,625          | 52.0 | 73.2                          | 17,221                    | 56.7 |
| Total (permanent)<br>dwellings | -                             | 8,027           | -    | -                             | 22,335          | -    | -                             | 30,362                    | -    |

\* From 1970 national census in which many Gypsies were evidently not classified as such.

TABLE 6. Economic Activity of the Gypsy Population (1967-70). (150 : Table III, recapitulation).

|                                 | 1967    | 1968    | 1970*  |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|--------|
| Gypsy pop. of productive age ** | 108,021 | 105,190 | 92,593 |
| Of which regularly working      | 48,899  | 52,663  | 53,760 |
|                                 | 45.3%   | 50.1%   | 58.06% |

\* From 1970 national census in which many Gypsies were evidently not classified as such.

\*\* Men 15-59 years; women 15-54 years.

TABLE 7. Placing Gypsy Adolescents (1969, 1970). (150 : Table IV/1).

|                 |                 | Total  |       | To Higher Schools |      | To Apprenticeships |      | To work |       | Continue in basic school |      | Remain at home |       | Other unplaced |      |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------|-------|-------------------|------|--------------------|------|---------|-------|--------------------------|------|----------------|-------|----------------|------|
|                 |                 | 1969   | 1970  | 1969              | 1970 | 1969               | 1970 | 1969    | 1970  | 1969                     | 1970 | 1969           | 1970  | 1969           | 1970 |
| Czech lands     | Gs.             | 987*   | 1,044 | 6                 | 8    | 181                | 225  | 558     | 590   | 32                       | 42   | 85             | 83    | 127            | 96   |
|                 | % of total pop. | -      | -     | 0.5               | 0.7  | 19                 | 21.5 | 56      | 56.5  | 3.5                      | 4    | 9              | 7.9   | 13             | 9.4  |
| Slovakia        | Gs.             | 2,677  | 2,853 | 104               | 101  | 684                | 662  | 746     | 827   | 79                       | 86   | 649            | 1,092 | 415            | 85   |
|                 | %               | -      | -     | 3.8               | 3.5  | 25.5               | 23.5 | 27.8    | 28.9  | 2.9                      | 3    | 24.5           | 38.2  | 15.5           | 2.9  |
| Czecho-slovakia | Gs.             | 3,664* | 3,897 | 110               | 109  | 865                | 887  | 1,304   | 1,417 | 111                      | 128  | 734            | 1,175 | 542            | 181  |
|                 | %               | -      | -     | 3                 | 2.7  | 23.6               | 22.7 | 35.5    | 36.3  | 2                        | 3.2  | 20             | 31.1  | 15             | 4    |

\* Sic. although summing individual columns gives figures of 989 for Czech lands and 3,666 for Czechoslovakia.



TABLE 8. Gypsy Adolescents in Middle and High Schools  
(incl. apprentices) (1967-70).

(150 : Table II/7)

| Territory      | 1967  | 1968  | 1969 | 1970 | Total<br>1967-1970 |
|----------------|-------|-------|------|------|--------------------|
| Czech lands    | 310   | 525   | 187  | 233  | 1,255              |
| Slovakia       | 1,262 | 1,280 | 766  | 763  | 4,071              |
| Czechoslovakia | 1,572 | 1,805 | 953  | 996  | 5,326              |

TABLE 9. Gypsy children resident in state institutions (1967).  
 (based on 1967 Census).

| Area            | Type of Institute |     |               |      |                       |      |                        |      |                              |      |       |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----|---------------|------|-----------------------|------|------------------------|------|------------------------------|------|-------|
|                 | crèche            |     | infants' home |      | child.home (1-3 yrs.) |      | child.home (3-15 yrs.) |      | young pers. home(15-18 yrs.) |      | Total |
|                 | No.               | %   | No.           | %    | No.                   | %    | No.                    | %    | No.                          | %    |       |
| Czecho-slovakia | 478               | 0.7 | 892           | 12.5 | 804                   | 23.3 | 2091                   | 21.3 | 210                          | 24.8 | 4475  |
| Czech lands     | 353               | 0.7 | 440           | 8.8  | 440                   | 15.3 | 1160                   | 16.3 | 119                          | 19.4 | 2512  |
| Slovakia        | 125               | 0.6 | 452           | 20.9 | 364                   | 63.5 | 931                    | 34.8 | 91                           | 38.7 | 1963  |

Table 10

Table 17

Table 19

APPENDIX 'B' - NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS.

Note: The following list of documents is divided by periods (as given in Ch.4 and subdivided by geographical area. It is not a complete list of all important documents but only of those available. Nevertheless most important national documents after 1958 are listed here and also what is hoped is a representative set of local government documents. Documents are not always dated or named and in these cases it has been necessary to estimate a date or to invent a name. Names are in Czech (or Slovak) and English.

The numbers given in the left-hand column are sequence numbers used as references in the text of Chapters 4 to 6.

PERIODS: 1) to 3) (previous to 13.10.65).

AREA : Czechoslovakia, Czech lands, Slovakia.

| No. | Date     | Document Name   |
|-----|----------|---|
| 1   | 14. 7.27 | Zákon č.117/27 o potulných cikánech (Law 117 about nomadic gypsies).  |
| 2   | 26. 3.58 | Usnesení ÚV KSČ o práci mezi cikánským obyvatelstvem v ČSSR. (CP Central Committee Decree about work among g.pop. in Czechoslovakia).                     |
| 3   | 17.10.58 | Zákon č 74/58 Sb. o trválem usídlení kočujících osob. (Law 74 about the permanent settlement of nomads).  |
| 4   | 1958/59  | Směrnice min.vnitra (6.12.58), školství a kultury (30.10.58) a zdravotnictví (10.1.59). (Directives of Ministries of the Interior, Education and Health). |
| 5   | 1959     | Práce mezi cikánským obyvatelstvem (Work among the gypsy population).   |
| 7   | 1959     | Práca medzi cigánským obyvatelstvom (Work among the gypsy population), Slovak version.  |

| No. | Date     | Document Name   |
|-----|----------|---|
| 8   | 11. 7.60 | Ústava ČSSR - Ústavní zákon č100/60 Sb. (1960 Constitution).  |
| 9   | 1963     | Zoznam - zákonov, uznesení vlády, vyhlášok a úprav (1958-63). (List of laws, government decrees, regulations and instructions).                     |
| 10. | Oct? 64  | Zpráva o riešení problému obč. cig.pôv.-Slov.plánovacia komisia. (Report on solving problems of gypsies - Slovak Planning Commission).              |
| 11. | 9.64     | Zpráva o plnění usnesení ÚV/KSČ z roku 1958-Předsed. ÚV KSČ. (Report on fulfilling 1958 CP Central Committee Decree - CP Central Comm. Praesidium), |

PERIODS : 1) to 3).

AREA : North Moravia Region.

|    |        |  |
|----|--------|--|
| 12 | 1956   | Diplomová práce - Zdena Půcková (Diploma study by Z. Půcková).                 |
| 14 | 5.4.62 | Zpráva KNV - Komise pro školství a kultury (RNC report - education committee). |

PERIODS : 1) to 3).

AREA : East Slovakia Region.

|    |          |  |
|----|----------|--|
| 15 | 1958/59  | Príprava soupisu - KNV (Preparation for Nomads' Register - RNC).   |
| 16 | 12.11.58 | Zpráva KNV - (RNC report).   |
| 18 | 1963?    | Zpráva kraj.komise pre riešenie otázky cig.obyv.-Rade KNV. (Report of RNC Council's Gypsy Affairs Committee).            |
| 19 | 1963     | Návrh opatření na vyřešení...(Proposed measures for a solution...)   |
| 20 | 1963     | Zpráva o súčasnej situácii...a návrh na opatrenia. (Report on the contemporary situation...and a proposal for measures). |



PERIODS : 1) to 3). AREA : East Slovakia Region (Cont'd.....)

| No. | Date    | Document Name.   |
|-----|---------|--|
| 21  | 1964    | Koncepcia riešenie otázok obč.cig.pôv...do roku 1970.<br>(Plan for solving the gypsy question...up to 1970). |
| 22, | 15.5.65 | Inf. zpráva o postupe likvidaci cig.osad.<br>(Report on the gradual elimination of gypsy settlements).       |

PERIODS : 1) to 3). AREA : Spišská Nová Ves District.

|      |          |  |
|------|----------|--|
| 25   | 27.11.59 | Zpráva o činnosti komisie...od 4.10.58 do 31.12.58.<br>(Report on activities of the committee for G.affairs<br>4.10.58 - 31.12.58).            |
| 26   | 1959     | Soupis-počty za obcí (Register of nomads-numbers by<br>town and village).  |
| 27   | 6.10.60  | Zpráva z vykonanej previerkyplnenia uznesení rady<br>KNV a KV KSS. (Report on fulfilling decrees of RNC<br>council and CP Regional Committee). |
| 28   | 2.6.61   | Zpráva o situácii na úseku cig.probl.-ONVodb.pre<br>vnútr. veci. (Report on the gypsy situation - DNC<br>Dept. of the Interior).               |
| 29   | 1961     | Zpráva komise ONV (DNC Committee report).  |
| 30   | 1961     | Evidencia žiakov cig.pôv 1961 (Record of gypsy<br>pupils 1961).  |
| { 31 | 13.3.61  | Zpráva o hygen. opatrenie (Report on hygiene measures).  |
| { "  | 18.7.61  | Návrh plánu výstavby studní v cig.osad. (Plan of well-<br>building in g. settlements).   |
| 32   | 21.12.61 | Situácia na úseku plnenia zákona č 74-odb. pre vnútr.<br>veci. (Situation on fulfilling Law 74 - Dept. of<br>the Interior).                    |

| No. | Date     | Document name   |
|-----|----------|---|
| 33  | 1962     | Zpráva o práci medzi obč.cig.pôv - OV KSS<br>(Report on work among gypsies - District committee of CP.).                          |
| 34  | 1962     | Prehľad o situácii na úseku riešenie otázok obč. cig. pôv.-úsek prac. sil. (Survey of solving g. question - Dept. of employment). |
| 35  | 1962     | Zoznam obč. c.p., ktorí pracujú v jednotl. podnikoch v Čechách. (List of gypsies working in the Czech lands).                     |
| 36  | 17.5.62  | Zpráva OHES o práci medzi obyv.c.p. (Report of medical authority).  |
| 37  | 10.10.62 | Zpráva o plnenia uznesenie ÚV KSČ z 8.4.58 (Report on fulfilling CP directive).   |
| 38  | 30.10.62 | Výsledky prieskumu cig. usadlostí (Results of research on gypsy settling).  |
| 39  | 1963     | Zpráva o riešení cig. otázky (Report on solving the gypsy question).  |
| 40  | 1963     | Zpráva o súč. stave plnenia stran a vlád. uznesenie z 1958. (Report on fulfilling party and govt. decrees of 1958).               |
| 41  | 1963     | Zpráva o plnenia uznesenie ÚV KSČ...(Report on fulfilling CP decree).   |
| 42  | 1963     | Přehled negramotnosti a plán likvidace negram. v letech 1963-65 (Survey of illiteracy and plan for eliminating it 1963-65).       |
| 43  | 24.1.63  | Celookresný prehľad niektorých údajov k otázke cig. spoluobč.- (District survey of data about gypsy fellow-citizens).             |
| 44  | 3.63     | Plán okr. komisie pre rieš. otázok c.obč. (Plan of district committee).   |
| 45  | 8.11.63  | Zpráva o práci medzi obč.c.p. (Report of work among gypsy citizens).  |

| No. | Date     | Document name.   |
|-----|----------|--|
| 46  | late 63  | Úlohy na úseku riešenia otázok obĉ.c.p...1964<br>(Tasks for solving in 1964).  |
| 47  | 1964     | Stav evidencie kočujúcich a polokočujúcich osôb v zmysle zák.č 74. (State of records of nomads and semi-nomads as understood in Law 74).     |
| 48  | 1964     | Opatrenia k zpráve o riešení otázok obĉ.c.p.<br>(Measures resulting from the report on solving gypsy question).                              |
| 49  | 6.1.64   | Vyhodnotenie celk. činnosti...za roku 1963<br>(Evaluation of 1963 activity).   |
| 50  | 30.6.64  | Hláseni o výsledcích dosiahnutých na úseku...otázok c. oby.za Ipolrok. 64 (Results from first six months of 1964 in solving gypsy question). |
| 51  | 3.7.64   | Evidencia kočujúcich a polokoč. osôb, spresnenie<br>(Record of nomads and semi-nomads, improvement).   |
| 52  | 1.8.64   | Okresný prehľad kočujúcich osôb (District survey of nomads).   |
| 53  | 18.10.64 | Trestný činnosti obĉ.c.p. od 1.1. do 1.10.64<br>(Offences by gypsies 1.1. to 1.10.64).   |
| 54  | 30.10.64 | Návrh na likvidaci osady - Letanovce (Proposal for eliminating Letanovce settlement).  |
| 55  | 3.11.64  | Prehľad kult. a ekon.vývoje obĉ.c.p. (Survey of cultural and economic development of gypsies).   |
| 56  | 11.64    | Prehľad zamestnanie obĉ.c.p. v okrese (Survey of Gypsy employment in the district).  |
| 57  | 8.12.64  | Plán 1965 - riešenie cig.problém. v okrese.<br>(1965 Plan for solving the gypsy problem).  |
| 58  | 1965     | Pasportisace cig. osady v okrese - OHES. (Characterisation of gypsy settlements - District Health Authority).                                |



| No. | Date    | Document name.  |
|-----|---------|---|
| 59  | 1965    | Prehl'ad o počte vyslaných obč.c.p. na dosídlenie v roku 1963 a 1964...do Čiech (Numbers of gypsies sent to work in Bohemia 1963 and 64). |
| 60  | 1965    | Výkaz o činnosti na úseku riešení otázek c.p. v roku 1964 (Survey of activities to solve gypsy problem in 1964).                          |
| 61  | 20.1.65 | Stat. prehľad ožáciach c.p. v škol. roku 1964/5 k. 15.1.65. (Statistical survey of gypsy pupils in school year 1964-5).                   |
| 62  | 6.65    | Hlasenie o výsledkoch riešenie otázek obč.c.p. k.6.65 (Results of first six months 1965 in gypsy question).                               |
| 63  | 6.8.65  | Koncepcia riešenie otázek obč.c.p...do 1970. (Overall plan for solving g. problem till 1970).   |

PERIOD : 4) (13.10.65 - 7.11.68). AREA : Czechoslovakia, Czech lands, Slovakia.

|    |          |  |
|----|----------|--|
| 80 | 13.10.65 | Vládní usnesení č. 502/65 o opatřeních řešení otázek cik. obyv. (Government directive 502/65 about measures to solve the gypsy questions). |
| 82 | 13.10.65 | Důvodová zpráva pro vládní usnesení č.502/65 (Justifying report for government directive No.502/65).                                       |
| 83 | 1965     | Zásady pro organizování rozptýlu a přesunu cik.obyv. (Principles for organising the dispersal and transfer of gypsy population).           |
| 84 | 15.1.66  | Statut vládního výboru pro otázky cik. obyv. (Statute of the Government Committee for Questions of Gypsy population).                      |
| 85 | 18.12.65 | Hlavní směry k řešení otázek cik. obyv. (Main directions for solving questions of the gypsy population).                                   |

| No. | Date     | Document name  |
|-----|----------|--|
| 86  | 1966     | Směrnice a úkoly pro práci komisí rad krajských a okr. NV pro otázky c.obč. (Directives and tasks for RNC and DNC council committees).         |
| 87  | 20.6.66  | Informácia o úlohách vyplývajúcich z vlád. uznesenia č. 502 (Information about tasks stemming from Govt. Decree No. 502).                      |
| 88  | 2.11.66  | Kontrolní zpráva o plnění usnesení vl.výboru - Min. Zdravotnictví. (Control report on fulfilling Govt. Committee decree - Ministry of Health). |
| 89  | 27.6.66  | Usnesení vl. výboru z 27.6.66 (Govt.Committee Decree).   |
| 90  | 27.6.66  | Zápis z jednání vl. výboru z 27.6.66 (Minutes of Govt. Committee meeting).   |
| 91  | 1966     | Dětské domovy v ČSSR - Min.Školství (Childrens homes in ČSSR - Min. of Education).   |
| 92  | 1966     | Rozmísťovanie cik. mládeže do škol II cyklu, do učeb. a prac. poměru. (Placing gypsy youth in secondary education, apprenticeships and work).  |
| 93  | 15.12.66 | Zákon č. 117/66 Sb. o některých důsledcích zanedbávání péče o děti. (Law No. 117/66 Sb. about some consequences of neglecting children).       |
| 94  | 18.4.67  | Zpráva o plnění usnesení vlády č. 502/65 - Vl.Výbor. (Report on fulfilling Govt. Decree 502/65 - Govt.Comm.)                                   |
| 95  | 18.4.67  | Zpráva - Příloha II (Appendix II to Report (94)).  |
| 96  | 18.4.67  | Návrh usnesení vlády ČSSR - Příloha I. (Proposed government decree - Appendix I to Report (94)).   |
| 97  | 18.4.67  | Celostátní harmonogram likvidace cik. osad, čtvrtí a ulic.-Příloha III. (National plan for eliminating g. settlements, quarters and streets).  |
| 98  | 15.5.67  | Usnesení vlády č. 159/67 ke zprávě o plnění usnesení vlády č.502. (Govt.Decree No.159/67 after report on fulfilling Govt. Decree 502).         |

| No. | Date     | Document Name   |
|-----|----------|---|
| 99  | 25.4.68  | Zákon č.53/68 Sb o změnách v organizaci a působnosti některých ústřed. orgánů. (Law 53/68 Sb. about organisational changes of some central bodies). |
| 100 | 27.10.68 | Ústavní zákon č. 143/68 o čs. federaci. (Constitutional law No.143/68 about Czechoslovak federalisation).   |
| 101 | 7.11.68  | Vládní usnesení č. 384/68. (Govt.Decree No.384/68).   |

PERIOD : 4).                      AREA : North Moravia Region.

|     |        |   |
|-----|--------|---|
| 102 | 1966   | Návrh společ. dohody (Přerov/Bardejov).<br>(Proposal of a common agreement (Přerov/Bardejov). |
| 103 | 4.8.67 | Zpráva o plnění vl. usnesení č. 502.<br>(Report on fulfilling Govt. Decree 502).              |
| 104 | 1967   | Několik pohledů - Zdena Půcková. (Some observations - Zdena Půcková).                         |
| 105 | 1967?  | Počet cik. u Sev. Mor.Kraj. (No. of gypsies in N. Moravia Region).                            |
| 106 | 1967   | Zpráva o plnění vl. usnesení č.502/65. (Report on fulfilling Govt. Decree 502/65).            |

PERIOD : 4).                      AREA : East Slovakia Region.

|     |         |   |
|-----|---------|---|
| 107 | 1966    | Cig.problém a jeho riešenie vo Vychodoslov. kraji.<br>(Gypsy problem and its solution in E. Slovak Region - E. Davidová and J. Špiner). |
| 108 | 6.66    | Zpráva o plnenia vl. uznesenie č.502/65 ve Vychodoslov. kraji. (Report on fulfilling Govt. Decree 502/65 in E. Slovakia Region).        |
| 109 | 29.6.66 | Rozptyl cig. rod. do česk. krajov-určenie smerných čísiel. (Dispersal of gypsy families to Czech lands - numbers).                      |



PERIOD : 4).

AREA : Spišská Nová Ves District.

| No. | Date     | Document Name.  |
|-----|----------|---|
| 110 | 23.12.65 | Kúpna zmluva - Arnutovce (Purchase contract - Arnutovce).   |
| 111 | 1966     | Riešenie otázok cig. obyv....do roku 1970.<br>(Solving the gypsy question till 1970).   |
| 112 | 1966     | Plán - Letanovce (Plan of gypsy settlement - Letanovce)   |
| 113 | 1966     | Zpráva o žacích c.p. (Report about gypsy pupils).   |
| 114 | 1966     | Plán likvidace osady Podbrezova - Rudňany (Plan for eliminating settlement at Podbrezova - Rudňany).                            |
| 115 | 7.6.66   | Návrh na likvidaci cik. osady - Bystrany. (Proposal for eliminating gypsy settlement - Bystrany).                               |
| 116 | 21.1.66  | Návrh na plnenia opatr. k zabezpečenie uzn. vlády č. 502. (Proposal for carrying out measures to fulfil Government Decree 502). |
| 117 | 10.6.66  | Zpráva o previerke rozptylu cig. osady v obci Letanovce (Report on dispersing gypsy settlement in Letanovce).                   |
| 118 | 1.7.66   | Dopis od A.D. (Ostrava) a odpověď ONV.<br>(Letter from A.D. (Ostrava) and DNC reply).   |
| 119 | 1966     | Rozptyl cig. rodin do č. krajov (Dispersal of gypsy families to Czech lands).   |
| 120 | 18.7.66  | Odsun cig. rodin do č. krajov (Removal of gypsy families to Czech lands).   |
| 121 | 22.7.66  | Likvidácia cig. osad, vyplatené v roku 1965<br>(Elimination of gypsy settlements, payments in 1965).                            |
| 122 | 3.8.66   | Priemluva za schválenie - koupě rod. dom.<br>(Agreement on purchase of a family house).   |

| No. | Date     | Document Name.  |
|-----|----------|---|
| 123 | 1.9.66   | Základní ukazatele o počtech cig. obyv. k. 1.9.66.<br>(Basic statistics about gs. till 1.9.66).                                       |
| 124 | 12.66    | Výsledky činnosti na úseku riešenie otáz.c.obyv. v r. 1966. (Result of activities in solving the gypsy question in 1966).             |
| 125 | 1967     | Stat. prehľad prospiechu a chovanie žiakov cig.pôv<br>(Statistical survey of progress and behaviour of gypsy pupils).                 |
| 126 | 2.1.67   | Vymáhanie cestovného od cig. obyv., ktorí sa vrátili z č. krajov. (Recovery of fares from gypsies who returned from the Czech lands). |
| 127 | 10.1.67  | Zpráva o poskytování služeb doplňkové péče obc.c.p.<br>(Report about services provided for gypsies).                                  |
| 128 | 2.67     | Súčasný stav riešenie problémov c. obyv. (Contemporary state of solving problems of gypsy population).                                |
| 129 | 15.2.67  | Zpráva o práci okresnej komisie za 1966. (Report on work of the district committee in 1966).  |
| 130 | 31.12.67 | Výkaz o počte a pohybe cig. obyv. k 31.12.67.<br>(1967 Census of gypsy population on 31.12.67).                                       |
| 132 | 8.12.67  | Poznámky k výkazu (Notes about making census of gypsy population).  |
| 133 | 31.12.67 | Výkaz podle obcí. (Census - by town and village).   |
| 134 | 31.8.67  | Prehľad o zamestnanosti cig. obc.k. 31.8.68<br>(Survey of employment of gypsy citizens - 31.8.68).                                    |

PERIOD : 5). (after 7.11.68).      AREA : Czechoslovakia (Federated state).

135    9.12.68    Ústavní zákon č. 171/68 o zřízení federálních ministerův a fed. výborů. (Constitutional law No.171 on establishing federal ministries and committees).

| No. | Date     | Document Name.  |
|-----|----------|---|
| 136 | 2.12.68  | Návrh osnovy pro zpracování zprávy ohodnocení vývoje řešení ot.c.obyv. (Proposal for a program to evaluate progress in gypsy question). |
| 137 | 15.5.70  | Zpráva o problematice cik. obyv. - MPSV-ČSSR. (Report on problem of gypsy population - Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs).  |
| 150 | 24.11.71 | Zpráva o současném stavu řešení otázek cik. obyv. MPSV-ČSSR. (Report on the contemporary situation - Federal Ministry of Labour).       |

PERIOD ; 5).

AREA : Czech Socialist Republic (ČSR)

- |     |         |   |
|-----|---------|---|
| 138 | 8.1.69  | Zákon č. 2/69 Sb. ČSR o zřízení ministerův a jiných ústředních orgánů. (Law No. 2/69 on establishing ministries and other central bodies).  |
| 139 | 14.7.69 | Směrnice č. 21 o výchově a vzdělávání výchovně zanedbaných a prospěchově opožděných cik. dětí. Min. Školství ČSR. (Directive 21 on the education of educationally neglected and backward gypsy children - Czech Ministry of education). |
| 140 | 2.12.69 | Zpráva o současném stavu řešení otázek cik.obyv. v ČSR-MPSV. (Report on contemporary state of solving questions of gypsy population in Czech lands - Min. of Labour).   |
| 141 | 2.12.69 | Návrh usnesení vlády ČSR - Příloha 1. (Proposal for a Czech government decree - appendix one).  |
| 142 | 5.70    | Sjezd v MPSV-ČSSR (Seminar at Federal Min.of Labour).   |
| 143 | 20.5.70 | Zpráva o připravovaném řešení v přestěhování rodin cik. původu (Report on moving gypsy families - a N. Bohemian NC (Most)).   |



| No. | Date     | Document Name   |
|-----|----------|---|
| 144 | 25.11.70 | Usnesení vlády ČSR/ č.279 ke zprávě o současném stavu...<br>(Govt. decree ČSR No.279 after the report on the contemporary situation). |
| 145 | 25.11.70 | Statut komise vlády ČSR pro otázky cik.obyv.<br>(Statute of Czech Govt. Committee for Questions of Gypsy population).                 |

PERIOD : 5).                      AREA : Slovak Socialist Republic (SSR).

|     |         |  |
|-----|---------|--|
| 146 | 11.68   | Plnení harmonogramu práce...za I-III čtvrtrok 1968 a návrh plánu na 1969 (Fulfilling work timetable 1st to 3rd quarters 1969 and 1969 plan).                                 |
| 147 | 4.70    | Koncepcie riešenie problémov cig.obyv.v rokoch 1971-80. (Plan of solution of problems of gypsy population 1971-80).  |
| 148 | 3.71    | Správa o plnění plánu a rozpočtu ONV...výroku 1970 a rozpočet na rok 1971. (Report on fulfilling DNC plan and budget 1970 and 1971 budget).                                  |
| 149 | 10.6.71 | Metodická úprava pre financovanie výdavkov určených pre riešenie cig. otázky na ONV a KNV. (Arrangements for financing payments for solving gypsy questions at DNC and RNC). |

PERIOD : 5).                      AREA : North Moravia Region.

|     |          |   |
|-----|----------|---|
| 151 | 31.12.68 | Výkaz o počtu a pohybu osob cik. původu k 31.12.68.<br>(Report on numbers and movements of persons of gypsy origin up to 31.12.68). |
| 152 | 31.7.69  | Zpráva o plnění usnesení č.502/65...na léta 1966-68 KNV. (Report on fulfilling decree No.502/65...1966-68 RNC).                     |

| No.   | Date     | Document Name   |
|-------|----------|---|
| 153   | 31.12.69 | Současný stav v zajištění péče o cik.obvy v ČSSR a kraje. (Contemporary state in ensuring care of gypsy population in Czechoslovakia and region). |
| 156   | 1970     | Několik poznámek o hospodářství v Ostravě - MěNV. (Some remarks about the economy in Ostrava).  |
| 157   | 1970/71  | Přehled cik. dětí ve škole v Ostravě (Survey of Gypsy children at school in Ostrava).   |
| 159   | 12.68    | Vysvětlivky pro jednorázový výkaz....k 31.12.68. (Explanatory instructions for 1968 census of Gypsies).   |
| 160   | 31.12.68 | Výkaz o počte a pohybe cig. obyv. k. 31.12.68. (1968 census of Gypsies).  |
| 161   | 7.2.69   | Návrh na riešenie cig. problematiky Slov. nář.orgánmi. (Proposal for solving the gypsy problem by Slovak national bodies).                        |
| 162   | 15.8.69  | Stav riešenia problematiky cig. obyv. (State of solving the gypsy question).  |
| 163   | 1970     | Počty podle obcí (Numbers by community).  |
| 164   | 10.4.70  | Zpráva o riešenie cig. probl.za rok 1969 a návrh.. nář. 1970. (Report on solving gypsy problem in 1969 and proposal for 1970).                    |
| 166   | 11.9.70  | Zpráva o I.polrok 1970 (Report on first half year 1970).  |
| 167/9 | 12.70    | Využití materiálních a potenciálních zdrojů/okresu. (Use of material and potential resources of the district).                                    |
| 168   | 29.12.70 | Konečný návrh organizácie osídlenív okrese. (Final proposal for organising settlement in the district).   |
| 170   | 31.12.70 | Štatistické údaje o počte, vekovej skladbe atd. k 31.12.70. (Census of gypsies on 31.12.70).  |
| 171   | 1971     | Predběžné výsledky sčítania ľudu, domov a bytu k 1.12.70 (Preliminary results of national census on 1.12.70).                                     |

| No. | Date     | Document Name  |
|-----|----------|--|
| 172 | 29.4.71  | Zpráva (Report on budget and school attendance).   |
| 173 | 6.71     | Zpráva - komisie pre otáz.cig.obyv. (Gypsy affairs Committee report).                                    |
| 174 | 12.8.71  | Zpráva o hygienickej situácii v cig. osadách.<br>(Report of hygienic situation in gypsy settlements).    |
| 175 | 16.11.71 | Trestná činnosť' pachana osobami c.p. yroku 1970.<br>(Punishable offences committed by gypsies in 1970). |



REFERENCES FOR CHAPTERS FOUR TO SIX.

- E. H. Carr - 'The Bolshevik Revolution. Vol.I', Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1950.
- E. Davidová - 'Cikánské' (Romské) etnikum v Ostravě! VÚVA. Prague, 1970.
- Facts : - 'Facts about Czechoslovakia', Orbis. Prague, 1967.
- Handbook : - 'Czechoslovakia : A Handbook of Facts and Figures'. Orbis, Prague, 1964.
- M. Mübschmannová - 'cikáni = Cikáni?' Reportérova Ročenka, 1968.
- K. Kára et.al., - 'Ke společenské problematice Cikánů v ČSSR.' ÚFS ČSAV, Prague, 1975.
- P. Machonin et.al., - 'Československá společnost.' Epoque, Bratislava, 1968.
- Mem. : - 'Memorandum of the Praesidium of the Czech Gypsy Rom Association' (17.4.70).
- R. Selucký - 'Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe : Political Background and Economic Significance', Praeger, London, 1972.
- K. Sidon - 'Černí a bílí' in 'Literární listy'. 25.7.1968.
- V. Srb - 'Cikáni v Československu' in 'Demografie'. Ročník XI č.3.1970.
- Statistical Abstract - Orbis. Prague, 1968.
- ed. V. Straka - 'Czechoslovakia Today', Artia, Prague, 1964.
- Survey - 'Mínění o cikánech', Výzkum č.70-9. Ústav pro výzkum veřejného mínění. Prague, March 1971.
- J. Sus - 'Cikánská otázka v ČSSR'. SNPL, Prague, 1961.
- O. Ulč - 'Communist National Minority Policy : The Case of the Gypsies in Czechoslovakia', Soviet Studies, April, 1969.
- O. Ulč (2) - 'Politics in Czechoslovakia', Freeman, San Francisco, 1974.
- V. Vydra - 'Aspects of the Czechoslovak Economy : Changes in the Management of Agriculture', Orbis, Prague, 1968.

- G. Wheeler - 'The Human Face of Socialism : The Political Economy of Change in Czechoslovakia'. Lawrence Hill, New York, 1973.
- Yearbook : - 'Czechoslovakia Yearbook, 1967', Pragopress, 1967.
- 1967 Census : - 'Cikánské obyvatelstvo v roce 1967', Státní statistický úřad. Prague, 1968.